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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE FARCE OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

—Let us
Act with prudence and with manly temper
As well as manly firmness ;
'Tis god-like magnanimity to keep,
When most provoked, our reason calm and clear,
And execute her will, from a strong sense of what is
right.

THOMSON.

ON the same day, when Kate D'Arcy and her father had been driven by the rain to seek shelter at the farm house, a splendid party had assembled at the country mansion of Sir Charles Trenton. Easton Court,

as this was called, was a noble house, surrounded by nearly three thousand acres of land, in one of the north western counties of England.

It had been purchased, on his marriage, with a part of his wife's fortune, and it was generally understood in the fashionable world, to be entailed, together with other large possessions, by the will of Lady Trenton's great uncle, upon her cousin, Miss Carrington. Sir Charles had, therefore, no inducement to expend money either in improving his lands, or bettering the condition of his tenants. In fact, both were deplorably neglected; for the man of fashion seldom resided on any of his estates, and never troubled his head about them in any way, except to direct the votes of his farmers at the county elections, and to get as much money from them as he possibly could. He was, of course, like most others of his class, a staunch protectionist; for though he did not care a straw for the interests of the farmers, and would have seen

the labouring classes reduced to starvation by high prices, without compunction, he had a very great fear of his own rents being lowered. In fact, with an income of fifteen thousand a year, he was overwhelmed with debt; his own property entirely mortgaged, and ruin staring him in the face should Lady Trenton die before him.

The Baronet's marriage had, on his side, been entirely for money, though he had taken great pains to persuade his victim, before their union, that he was devotedly attached to her; and she looked up to him with the most loving admiration. She actually believed him perfection; for she had been brought up by a pure-minded mother, in utter ignorance of men's ways, except what she gleaned from the few chosen novels she was permitted to read; sentimental histories of the outward seemings of a sophisticated society.

Of mental discipline, of mental industry and moral strength, she knew nothing, but considered it as a matter of course, that

she was to go through life, walking on velvet carpets, lolling in satin-cushioned carriages, and robed in satins and fine linen. She was one of those gentle-hearted women, who, when their sensibility is fostered into disease, by idleness and indulgence, are described in the language of their associates, as having too much feeling for their own happiness.

She would have been a gentle, loving, and happy wife, to an honest man who requited her attachment; but, with Sir Charles Trenton, after a very short lapse of time, she was miserable.

Very soon after her father's death, his pretended love took the form of polite indifference; and some discussions occurred between them, which greatly impaired her admiration and respect for his character. Yet, still, her affection was too strong to be lightly shaken; and she trusted that he was deceived, and not wilfully persisting in wrong.

Long she submitted, with the most patient affection, to obey his will, even when she disapproved; and to comply in all things with his caprices; but his coldness and indifference daily increased. Once, her meek nature was roused to reproach him; but the withering scorn with which he warned her to beware of making scenes, which might provoke the observations of the world, seemed to change her whole character.

What passed in her heart, Sir Charles never enquired; and she never disclosed her pangs to any human being; but pride seemed to gain the victory over her gentle and affectionate nature; and a strength of character, which, during her former flattered and prosperous years, had never been called forth, now came to her aid, and enabled her to assume the mask of indifference.

Finding no happiness at home, she sought forgetfulness in dissipation, and she ran all the gay and expensive course

of what is called pleasure, merely to banish thought and stifle feeling.

Miss Carrington saw all this too nearly, not to understand that Sir Charles despised his wife; and sympathizing rather with this brilliant man of the world, than with his unattractive lady, she thought he was perfectly right in doing so; she resolved, however, that such experience should not be lost upon her, and that she would never marry any man who sought her only for her fortune. The natural vanity of woman revolts against such a humiliation; but an heiress is the last person in the world likely to discern the true impulse of her admirer's addresses.

Miss Carrington was, in fact, indebted far more to her fortune, than she was willing to believe, for the number of her suitors; for marriage has become, in England, much more an affair of calculation than of love. Luxury has created such a mass of wants and necessities for her favoured children of both sexes, and

money is so necessary for the gratification of these artificial desires, and to defray the expenses incurred by a habitual slavery to opinion; that both the men and women of the upper classes regard dress, company, and that undefinable thing called position in society, as so absolutely necessary to the happiness of their existence, that they sacrifice to these brilliant delusions of social life, the pure and disinterested affection, which can alone confer real and lasting happiness. There are now very few girls who marry beneath them for love; for a woman must have been prepared by a very different education from that commonly given to the children of the aristocracy, to incur, with premeditation, and support with dignity, the loss of caste, which a humble marriage entails upon her. The world of fashion visits the sins of its rebellious subjects, with unpitying severity.

Men of independent fortune have given up marrying for anything but money long

ago. They are so engrossed by selfish pleasures, that they dread being deprived of any of their wonted indulgences, by the expenses of a wife and family. They seek low women, who flatter them unscrupulously, and make them the most degraded slaves under the name of freedom. These are bad symptoms of the times.

Miss Carrington, though she talked a great deal about poetry and pictures, and believed herself very noble-minded and disinterested, had never, up to this time, thought of marrying any one, but a peer. She had resolved from the first evening she went to a children's ball, and had danced with little Lord Foppington, that she would marry to have a coronet on her carriage ; and she had already rejected three offers, which any other girl would have thought highly eligible.

Lady Trenton had evidently encouraged the addresses of these gentlemen, but Sir Charles, without openly declaring any opinion, had contrived to impress Emily's

mind, that they were utterly unworthy of her. By the subtle flattery of looks and manner, more insinuating than words, he held her completely in his power. He seemed to exercise a sort of magic influence over her, which she was unable to resist, however, at times, she might attempt to rebel against his authority. Though she admired and liked him, she frequently experienced a strange sensation of discomfort in his presence, almost amounting to fear ; and it was odd enough, though generally very frank and open in her conversations with him, that she had carefully avoided making any allusion in his presence to the intimacy she had formed with Leonard Marston, and she had never spoken one word, concerning the portrait he had painted of her. By her request, it was kept back for the exhibition the following year.

When Sir Charles Trenton gave the young artist an invitation to Easton Court, he had not the slightest suspicion

that Miss Carrington had already commenced a flirtation with him.

Cosway, and several other idle men about town were invited at the same time; and Lesley, who was spending the long vacation at his father's house in the neighbourhood, was from the first day of their arrival, a frequent visitor. It was soon evident to all, that he was paying court, in due form, to Emily Carrington. The lady laughed and flirted with him, as she had done with many others; and yet vain and quietly presumptuous as he was, he by no means felt certain, that she seriously encouraged his addresses. Had he once heard how the heiress and Cosway ridiculed him behind his back, he would have had a clearer perception of his position. But even in company, Cosway, who had partly confessed to Marston that he too had a design on the fair Emily, treated the affected finery, and pretended refinement of Lesley with a high-bred indifference, which mortifi-

fied him to the very soul ; for he felt that this alone was sufficient to prevent him gaining the high place he desired in Miss Carrington's esteem.

To submit tamely to the impertinence of a man, whom he now began to regard as a rival, was galling and humiliating in the extreme ; but Cosway was too adroit a man of the world to afford him any point of attack, or any plausible excuse for resentment. So he went on, enduring daily mortification as a penalty to be paid by all pretenders, for being received into fine society, and endeavouring to look exceedingly happy, as if totally unconscious that everybody around him considered him in a false position.

Cosway, with his careless, witty, lively manner, contrived to keep Miss Carrington continually amused, though certainly at other people's expense ; but that is quite admissible, particularly in a man like Cosway, who had always the laugh on his

side, and whose contemptuous indifference was even more cutting than his ridicule.

Lesley had the sense to feel, that he should only expose himself to ridicule, by betraying his anger, or mortification ; but he resolutely persisted in his courtship. His own high estimation of his personal endowments, and his consciousness of being heir to a fortune, equal to that of Miss Carrington, were sufficient to sustain his hopes of ultimate success, particularly as she betrayed no marks of preference for the witty barrister, whom she well knew to be an almost portionless younger brother.

Cosway often, in his wild way, declared that he was not a marrying man ; that he could not expect any woman to smile upon a briefless barrister, with no fortune but a blue bag, and a horse-hair wig ; but Lesley did not trust in any of these professions, and well knowing how much Cosway was his enemy, it annoyed him greatly to dis-

cover that he was likely to remain the whole autumn at Easton Court, whilst his own intercourse with Miss Carrington must be limited to occasional visits. These, however, he contrived to make almost daily, under some pretence or other, and from Lady Trenton, at least, he was sure of a friendly welcome.

One morning, when he arrived somewhat earlier than usual, he was surprised to find Leonard Marston alone with Miss Carrington, in the drawing-room. He was completely annoyed, when he heard the painter discussing, with the ease of an established guest, the arrangements making in a certain northern chamber, to render it perfectly convenient for him as a painting room.

Miss Carrington, as if to signify her command, that the enmity which had formerly existed between them should cease under that roof, again introduced them, as if they had never met before. A slight bow was then exchanged between

them. She well understood that it was no sign of truce, but without taking any further notice of Lesley, she allowed that gentleman to go to the billiard-room, where she told him he would find Sir Charles, and pursued her animated conversation with Marston.

She was indeed delighted to see the artist ; delighted to feel the power of his genius, animating her whole being, and enlivening the dullness of Easton Court, where even Cosway's spirits began to flag, after being under the same roof, with the same people, for above a week, with nobody particularly worth the trouble of quizzing, and no very dangerous rival to excite him, by seriously disputing his slow, but as he flattered himself, sure progress in Miss Carrington's esteem. But, in fact, the girl had got tired of a man who seemed to have no object in life, but to amuse himself ; she had longed for converse with a mind more vigorous, fresh and exciting, than that of this thorough man of the

world, who floated like a butterfly over the surfaces of things ; sedulously avoiding everything likely to give rise to argument, or awaken a disquisition. Gosway was like a flame, bright and enlivening when it has extraneous matter to feed upon, but expiring as soon as it is deprived of such support.

Marston, on the contrary, was gifted with an original mind, overflowing with fresh thoughts, and beautiful images; and Miss Carrington provoked Lesley, that evening, beyond expression, by telling him, that when listening to the artist's conversation, she felt as if she were sitting in a blooming garden in the sunshine.

"Your own charming fancy embellishes every subject," he replied, with undisguised sarcasm. "To cold-headed lawyers like myself, I confess, the flowery language of artists has less charm. They are seldom men of education—how should they be? for no man of education would adopt such a profession—and I have no doubt, with

your delicate tact, you will soon be made sensible of the difference between such people and the men of your own class."

"I am perfectly sensible of it, and I am glad to find you are so also," replied Miss Carrington; and then, with a slight bow, and one of her most provoking little laughs, she arose, and left Lesley to interpret her words at his pleasure, whilst she joined Leonard Marston in another part of the room.

She remained there, nearly an hour, listening, with undisguised pleasure, to the artist's explanations, as he turned over a portfolio of sketches, taken in Sicily, and exchanged many interesting remarks concerning the antiquities of that wild and beautiful island, with Cosway and Lady Trenton.

CHAPTER II.

Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,
Whom pleasure keeps too busy to be wise,
Who frown with vanity, who smile with art,
And ask the latest fashion of the heart,
What care, what rules, your heedless charms shall
save ?

Each nymph your rival, and each youth your slave !

S. JOHNSON.

SIR CHARLES TRENTON was from home for several days after Marston's arrival at Eastern Court, being occupied in making various preparations for his approaching election for the county in which he resided. But, during his absence, Emily was in-

vested with full powers to make every arrangement she judged necessary for the artist's accommodation in the execution of the pictures he had come down to paint ; Lady Trenton in no way interfered ; for, as Miss Carrington was an artist herself, Sir Charles had told her, she was to do whatever she thought best, even with regard to the subjects of the pictures.

She selected, for Marston, one of the most charming rooms in the house, with a northern aspect ; and, with the gaiety of a school-girl, she assisted at the unpacking of his canvasses and colours, and watched, with impatience, the arrangement of his pallet, and the first touches of his pencils.

Cosway was likewise there, pretending to make himself exceedingly busy ; but, in reality, only lingering there to enjoy Emily's society, and prevent her being alone with the painter.

At first, Marston could not forget the struggles of passion which had already distracted him, whilst painting the portrait

at Lady Charlotte's ; and he adhered, as long as he was able, to his prudent resolution of maintaining a polite reserve of manner in Miss Carrington's company ; but this did not last long. Such was the unrestrained gaiety of Cosway and Emily, that he soon forgot all previous resolutions, and, encouraged by their lively sallies, gave way to the natural vivacity and frankness of his nature.

Miss Carrington also lost all restraint, when she had been half an hour in the painting-room ; the timid grace with which she had, at first, offered a brush to the painter, or handed him a colour, was speedily replaced by the easy, frank familiarity of a sister, and the conventional conversation of the drawing-room was laid aside, for careless and easy chat.

Some of the dowagers, visiting in the house, were much scandalized by the gay laughter that was frequently heard from the painting room ; and had they heard all that passed there, they would certainly

have accused the pretty Emily of flirting in the highest degree. But, happy and amused, as she had seldom been amused in her life, she never troubled herself about any observations her conduct might provoke. The only thing which seriously annoyed her, was when any of the young ladies staying in the house, ventured to intrude into the painting-room. Their ridiculous pretensions to a knowledge of art, provoked her to reply to them, sometimes with positive rudeness; and she had no scruple in making them fully sensible that their company was not at all desired.

Old Lady Charlotte had not yet arrived, or she, perhaps, might have kept better order; and Lady Trenton never paid any attention to her fair cousin's proceedings, except when her husband was present.

Had it, therefore, not been for Cosway, it is very probable [that Miss Carrington would have been alone with Leonard

Marston during the whole morning, for several days after his arrival. But that gentleman seemed suddenly endowed with a wonderful admiration for art, and to watch, with the deepest interest, every stroke of Marston's pencil; and the artist was exceedingly obliged to him; for though the gay company of Emily gave a charm to existence, such as he had never before experienced, he yet dreaded to be left alone with her. Whilst the girl was sporting carelessly round the abyss of passion, he saw clearly all the dangers which awaited them there, and shrunk back, afraid of the strength of his own feelings.

Cosway failed not to observe the glances of admiration with which Marston followed the graceful movements of the beautiful girl; and well aware how much her vanity delighted in such homage, he was alarmed for both; and whilst certain little cherished dreams of his own made him very anxious to prevent Miss Carrington becoming seriously in love with the painter, he had

sufficient generosity, to desire to save Marston from the danger of needless pain and disappointment.

Whilst all this was going on, Lesley had few opportunities of urging his suit. He seldom saw Emily when he called; she was either in the painting-room, or she had walked out to make sketches with Marston and Lady Trenton, or the whole party had driven over to some old ruin, or gone to view some distant prospect.

Whenever he dined at Easton Court, his jealousy of Leonard was excited to the highest pitch. Emily generally sat next the painter; and though Lesley had the mean satisfaction of seeing that the landed gentry of the neighbourhood behaved towards him with supercilious contempt, as soon as they learnt he was an artist, yet it enraged him to observe that Miss Carrington always treated him with the easy familiarity of an old friend, slightly heightened by the charms of an almost imperceptible coquetry, which often

unconsciously, betrays a pretty woman's wish to please.

The well born young gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who had fully determined to pay court to the heiress, were completely thrown out by her listening exclusively to the conversation of a man whom nobody knew, and whom they did not even deign to address. The young ladies, who had been taught to take rigid account of a man's position in society, before they exchanged a syllable with him, and who would as soon have thought of flirting with their father's upholsterer as with a penniless artist, were perfectly horrified at Miss Carrington's behaviour; and the mammas, both of young gentlemen and ladies, all declared that it was shocking for a girl of fortune to have so little breeding! Breeding! it is an excellent word; but I wonder if the good old souls ever heard of Christianity! or if they did, what did they think it means?

It must be confessed, that Emily, in her heart, was a thorough little flirt; and yet there was something generous in the impulse, which made her exert all her powers of pleasing, during that solemn party, for the benefit of the only person present whom the aristocratic company treated as unworthy of their honourable, though not very intellectual society. She was not yet broken in to certain prejudices and usages of this class, and she felt a delight in showing her independence and her power, by setting them at defiance, and zealously taking the part of their victim.

Cosway, during one of these very dull dinners, when Sir Charles Trenton was still absent, took the bottom of the table, and understanding Miss Carrington's object, generously came to her aid. The kindly glance with which she rewarded him, was the first he had ever received from her.

Marston, thus supported, astonished even

his friends, by his wit and varied powers of conversation.

One of the gentlemen who had arrived from London that morning, a man of high literary and social reputation, enquired, when they retired to the drawing-room, who that remarkable young man was.

"An artist," replied Lesley, in a tone expressive of the utmost contempt.

"I rejoice," said the stranger, "to see that a gentleman, and a man of genius, has chosen a profession, in which excellence can only be attained by exalted talent, but which, though it might be made a noble means of elevating and purifying the national mind, is now unfortunately despised and neglected for the pursuit of gain, as if nothing but money, or place, were worthy of the attention of those, who wish to be thought gentlemen."

"I am not aware that Mr. Marston's birth places him in a position to exalt any profession," answered Lesley, with a sneer.

"I am not accustomed to estimate men

by their parentage," returned the stranger, Mr. Thornton. "But till art is made honourable in England, it will be rare to find men of his education and general endowments amongst its professors; and it must degenerate instead of keeping pace with the intellectual progress of the age. Genius will turn to more respected pursuits, and art degenerate into a mere purveyor to marketable manufactures, and artists into imitative mechanics."

"I suspect that time has already arrived, if I may judge from the walls of our exhibitions," returned Lesley, with one of his bitterest sneers; "I do not think it at all likely, that this Mr. Marston will prove the regenerator of the English school even by his very ambitious performances."

"I beg your pardon," returned Mr. Thornton, "did you say this gentleman's name is Marston?"

"He is known by that designation," answered Lesley, in his most cold and austic manner.

“ Then I have not erred, I am happy to find, in my estimation of his abilities,” returned the old gentleman. “ I have seen two pictures by a young artist of that name, in the collection of my friend, Charles Westbrook; and you must be well aware, that to have a place in that gallery, stamps a man’s reputation at once. I must be introduced to him.”

In pursuance of this resolution, Mr. Thornton begged Cosway to present him to his friend ; but as he was neither a man of rank, nor fortune sufficient to excite the admiration of those who were incapable of appreciating his vast knowledge or refined taste, this circumstance was unnoticed by any one.

But it was a source of high gratification to Marston, particularly when he discovered that Mr. Thornton had known his uncle at the university—had esteemed him highly, and delighted to hear that he was living in the neighbourhood ; he proposed going to

Brookdale in the morning, to renew his acquaintance with his old associate.

“I am surprised to find that you are the nephew of my old friend,” he added, “for I was not aware that he ever had a brother.”

“I never knew my father,” was the artist’s reply, and he then remained silent; for the observation of Mr. Thornton had excited the remembrance of certain circumstances in his mind, which had formerly frequently puzzled him, but of which he had never been able to obtain a satisfactory elucidation.

Lesley had also heard Mr. Thornton’s observation, and Marston’s reply; and hoping that some mystery lay beneath, which might be of service to him, he secretly resolved to investigate the family history of a man, whom he pretended to despise, but secretly envied and detested, as a formidable rival in love, and the possessor of genius, which eclipsed his own pretensions to talent.

The party in the drawing-room that evening was enlivened by the arrival of old Lady Charlotte, who totally emancipated by her age and position in the fashionable world from all the rules of ordinary pretenders in the same circle, grew every day more busy, chattering and impertinent.

Only one thing had power to keep her quiet, and that was the card-table, where her talents for intrigue found full exercise, and her love of gain was wonderfully gratified. But this evening, even cards could not wholly engage her attention; the stakes of these county gentry were scarcely worth the trouble of cheating. The sum of money she expected from Lesley, in case she succeeded in bringing about his marriage with Miss Carrington, was of much more consequence; and the glances she cast at Marston and the fair Emily, from time to time, sufficed to convince her that her very cunning compact

was in serious danger of being rendered null and void.

“ Oh, Mr. Marston,” she said, determined to engage the artist’s attention, “ how delighted I am to find you here ! You must be enchanted with this beautiful country, and the ruins, and the fine woods and rural cottages, and green fields, after that horrid smoky Newman Street. I always think you Cockneys must particularly enjoy the daisies and forget-me-nots, and all the little sentimentalities of nature. They are so poetical.”

“ I know this country well, my lady,” answered Marston, laughing ; “ and I am afraid my sentimental days are as much at an end as yours. My uncle, Mr. Marston, is curate of Brookdale.”

“ What ! you have an uncle a curate ! a real country curate, one of that much injured, and much be-pitied, but yet still to be assisted class of ill-used gentlemen,” cried the old lady, laying down her cards,

with affected astonishment. "Well, I declare, this is quite delightful. I suppose he has to walk six miles at least, read three services, preach two sermons, and catechise the charity scholars on a Sunday; perform funerals, weddings, and baptism, inspect the paupers, direct the schoolmasters; besides saving the souls of his parishioners, and writing a hundred and twenty sermons for fifty pounds a year. I have the greatest curiosity to see one of these deputy rectors, who does all the work, whilst his master saves him the trouble of receiving the tithes."

"Poor fellows," said Cosway, with one of his dry sneers, "what a happy thing it is for them, that bishopricks and deaneries still retain their rich endowments as cheering objects for their ambition! Without such brilliant prospects, they might faint beneath their burdens, say the zealous advocates of our existing church establishment."

"But Mr. Marston, you will take me

and Miss Carrington to your uncle's ; won't you?" persisted Lady Charlotte.

"Certainly, if you desire it," said the artist. "Why not to-morrow morning ; I am going there with Mr. Thornton."

"Oh ! no, we must go alone," cried the old lady. "We must see everything, for I want Emily to have a true idea of love in a cottage, rural felicity, and all that kind of thing. You know how romantic she is."

"No, indeed," returned Marston, with as much indifference as he could assume, for he perfectly understood Lady Charlotte's meaning, "that is a part of Miss Carrington's character, with which I have yet to become acquainted."

"What scandal are you talking of me at the card table?" inquired Emily, gaily approaching, when she heard her own name.

"I was only speaking the truth of you," answered Lady Charlotte, "and told Mr. Marston you were very romantic."

“I declare such an accusation is quite abominable,” said the young lady, laughing.

“Oh, I suppose you are an admirer of art at present,” said the old woman, with a sly glance of her sharp black eyes, “but don’t trust to her, Mr. Marston ; she is wont to have a new fancy once a week, at least. Mr. Lesley, you have missed the deal—inexcusable—I should have marked the king again.”

“What, my Lady, four times following.”

“Why not ?” answered Lady Charlotte. “It only proves that I am more constant in my attachments, than young ladies of the present day.”

She looked round to point her sarcasm, by a glance at Emily, but she had already left the drawing-room, provoked beyond measure, at Lady Charlotte, for presuming to interfere with her flirtations. But the old woman only laughed at what she considered a victory, for she knew the world too well, not to feel assured, that

the day was not distant when Emily would herself be thankful to her, for preventing her getting entangled in a derogatory flirtation with an artist, the penniless nephew of a country curate.

CHAPTER III.

Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on refining,
And thought of convincing, whilst they thought of
dining.

'Though equal to all things, for all things unfit—
Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit.

GOLDSMITH.

ON the following day Sir Charles Trenton returned home from the Quarter Sessions, and appeared in the drawing-room before dinner to receive his guests. To those, who were already in the house, he apologised for having so long absented himself, and pleaded county business as an excuse,

“It is, after all, a confounded bore to be a magistrate in the present day,” he said, turning to Mr. Smithson, who, like himself, was a large landed proprietor, but totally devoid of talent—was only a dull representative of the prejudices of his class; very proud of his family and position in the county, though he spent three fourths of his rents elsewhere—a great supporter of the game laws, the corn laws, and clerical authority, and a virulent opponent of free trade.

“Yes! it is,” answered this Solomon “It is a very great bore—a confounded bore!”

“When it gave a man authority to clear his own neighbourhood of poachers and vagabonds, it might perhaps be worth the trouble; but now, when a scoundrel cannot be sent to the tread-mill without a hue and cry being raised in all the radical press, it is beneath a gentleman to have anything to do with the magistracy. Let the scoun-

drels look after one another, or pay a man for doing it."

"Exactly so!" returned Mr. Smithson. "Exactly my opinion. I fully intend to resign, for it is a horrid nuisance to be troubled with all these low wretches. It keeps me from the country three fourths of the year, I assure you. I once looked into Blackstone—but a man forgets those things, and, I assure you, I find it a confounded bore."

"We had a parcel of vagabonds before us to-day," rejoined Sir Charles, "who were concerned in the riot at the last public meeting against free-trade. There was one fellow I wished particularly to have punished, for he marched into the town at the head of all the scoundrels in the neighbourhood, with a loaf of bread on a pike."

"There was a terrible row, I heard," said the worthy member, "but they did not actually kill anybody, I believe. It is a great bore."

“They pelted me confoundedly, I know,” answered the Baronet, “though I believe they have found out by this time, that I only told them the truth, when I warned them, that free-trade would inevitably lower their wages. There was a child nearly trodden to death, as the constables were endeavouring to take this fellow, Ned Foster, into custody, and I hoped we should be able to get him sharply punished, for he is an old offender, but the evidence unluckily was insufficient. He is one of the people, and so I am not astonished that, in accordance with the cant of the day, he has been turned loose again on society to do more mischief.”

“Ah, the cant about humanity, and such stuff, is an abominable nuisance,” said Mr. Smithson. “I think I remember at one of our meetings, at Brookdale, about a year ago, we sent a fellow—Ned Foster—yes, that was the name—you and I, and Mr.—I don’t remember who was the other magistrate on the bench, that day—yes, we

sent this very Ned Foster to the treadmill for snaring my partridges,—and the scoundrel was very saucy I remember. It is really a very extraordinary coincidence.”

“The times are really quite threatening,” said Lady Louisa Thornhill, the fine wife of a hunting squire.

“What do they threaten, my lady?” inquired Cosway, with a most saucy look of simplicity.

“Oh, all sorts of horrors,” she replied. “I am told the bishops are to be robbed of their aprons, and the mob are menacing even the judge’s wigs. Every shop keeper goes to court, and a man of fortune and family is no more respected now a days, than a linen draper.”

“Nobody is respected now a days,” said Lesley, who certainly had no claim to respect on the score of family—but he probably forgot that.—“Nobody is thought anything of but the infamous radicals who make it a trade to flatter the vile multitude. Every thing rendered sacred by the vene-

ration of ages, is declared to be either an error or a lie, and torn down to be reformed or trampled under foot, by ambitious demagogues. Lady Louisa is right! after robbing the landholders by the admission of foreign corn, and ruining the lawyers by county courts, and pretended law reforms, they are now actually attacking the church, and meddling with the incomes of the bishops, with which they were endowed by our ancestors."

"Oh, yes, dear Mr. Lesley, it is quite dreadful," said the lady, "that our most sacred interests, and holy affections, are to be outraged at the pleasure of the mob. How can they expect a bishop to maintain the honour of the church and the dignity of a Peer of the realm, unless he has a handsome income. A poor bishop told me the other day, his wife must positively lay down her equipage, or it would be totally out of his power to save fortunes for his daughters, out of seven thousand a year."

"That must be an exceedingly great bore," responded Mr. Smithson.

"I believe the radical scoundrels would make us all lay down our carriages if they could," chimed in Mr. Thornhill.

"Perhaps it may come to that before long," said Cosway, with a sly glance at Emily, who laughed outright. "But after all, what was done with that young vagabond, Foster?" he added, turned to Sir Charles.

"He was set at liberty for the present, of course," answered the baronet. "but I have refused to renew his uncle's lease, for a farm he has held above twenty years. He had it during all the high prices, and yet had the audacity to expect I should lower it twenty per cent, in consequence of free trade. I told him, those who agitated reforms must take the consequences of them, and that farmers who gave their votes as he had done, to free trade members, would soon be made to feel that they had cut their own throats."

“What did the fellow say to that?” enquired Thornhill.

“Oh, he began to talk something about the rents before the war, and that the landlords had profited long, and must come down now, for the farmers could not work, and starve.”

“The greedy scoundrels!” cried the squire.

“I know they have reduced the labourers’ wages throughout the whole county,” said Thornhill, “and moreover, they have turned off half their workmen. How can they pay rents if the land is not properly worked?”

“There can be no doubt,” rejoined Lesley, “that with modern knowledge, the recent improvements in agriculture, and capital properly employed, the English soil might be made to produce double what it has hitherto done, if proper efforts were made.”

“But farmers won’t employ capital for the sole pleasure of paying landlords high

rents, I suspect," said Cosway, with a quaint gravity—the satire of which, Sir Charles Trenton, at least, perfectly understood.

"Then we must take the lands into our own hands," said Thornhill, with dogged obstinacy.

"That would be a confounded bore," responded the member, Mr. Smithson.

"I quite agree with you," said Cosway, laughing ; "and moreover, I am afraid, you gentleman are apt to find farming a very unprofitable business. In fact, my dear sir, when we remember that the interest of fundholders has been reduced—that the interest from railways has been reduced—that the holders of roads and canals have lost nearly the whole of their fortune, by modern changes in the value of property, I really fancy the landholders must submit, also, to a diminution of their incomes, which were long artificially increased at the expense of the people ! Most landholders are large proprietors,

and when a man has above a thousand a-year, he can more easily contract his outlay, by the mere sacrifice of a few fancies or luxuries, than a poor devil, who has only nine shillings a week to keep his wife and family, can contrive to exist upon six."

"It is plainly to be understood, Mr. Cosway," responded Mr. Smithson, with vast importance; "it is quite evident, I say, that you are not a man of landed property."

"I fear, on the contrary, he has become a communist, or something of that shocking description, when he was last in Paris," said Miss Carrington, with one of her pretty laughs. "Had I known it, I declare I would have dropped his acquaintance long ago."

"Or worked me a *bonnet rouge* with those delicate fingers," returned Cosway, gaily. "I know you are a terrible radical, Miss Carrington, and delight in heroes

with moustachios, and unpronounceable names."

"Oh yes ; they are delightful—all romantic interest, and mystery, and noble sentiments ; but your English downright radicals are very different ; low, disgusting fellows, who talk, and think about nothing but pounds, shillings, and pence. I detest the very names of such radicals."

"And they detest us, because they cannot get into our society, and know that we despise them," said Cosway, gravely. "But there are strong minds, and strong wills amongst them, and you, good people, may be very superior, and exceedingly well contented with yourselves, and one another ; yet, depend upon it, it is not quite safe to drive such enemies to desperation. They are very numerous, very active—understand the world well, and have quite as keen an appetite for the loaves and fishes as we have ; with this difference, that having never enjoyed them, they think it high

time that we who have, should, at present, resign our monopoly in their favour."

"There are laws, no doubt, for the defence of property!" said Mr Thornhill, with great pomposity.

"Oh yes," answered Cosway, lightly. "So they were in France before the first revolution; but people did not seem particular to observe them; and new laws, and new lawgivers are nothing uncommon now a days. Where people have not given with a good grace, what has been justly demanded of them, there are, I believe, several instances on record, of more being taken than was at first required. I fancy our British landlords, and certain members of our Church establishment, had better take this into serious consideration, if they wish to enjoy a portion of their present property and preferment in security."

"Upon my word, Mr. Cosway, you are a perfect revolutionist!" cried Lady Thornhill, with a disdainful toss of the head.

“He only talks that way to frighten you,” said Sir Charles Trenton, laughing, “he is too near in succession to the earldom of Parrington, not to be as good a conservative as ourselves, though he must talk liberal now he is trying for office ; like all the gentlemen of his party ; but they don’t mean it ! They only flatter the people to secure themselves places and patronage, and are hurried on further than they desire, by popular pressure.”

“You Protectionists talk of popular pressure, as if it were a thing to be put down,” said Cosway, gravely, “but, as a great political writer said, a good many years ago, it is the inevitable progress of the ocean of democracy, which bears down every object which it encounters. It may be directed by wisdom and by truth, but it cannot be resisted.”

“The English aristocracy, sir,” said Mr. Thornhill, “is a power, sir—a power which I am happy to think, has strength to maintain itself, in spite of the ranting of all

the demagogues in Europe. It is based on solid principle, sir—on property—and every man who has no property is a beggar and a radical, sir ! but they can do nothing—absolutely nothing—but disturb the minds of the people.”

“ They make long speeches in the House, terrible long speeches,” said Mr. Smithson, not at all excited by his neighbour’s passionate volubility. “ As I said to Lord D—— the other night, these radicals really are confounded bores.”

“ There was a time,” continued Cosway, after a short pause, occasioned by the ladies leaving the dining-room, “ and that time, not very long ago, when the feeblest cry of the people for some small social, or political reform, was regarded by men of the privileged classes, as the mere consequence of the teaching of some demagogues, who were to be rigidly put down, for disturbing the public peace. All who questioned the truth of the great lies, by which the power, and the idleness, and

the riches of the aristocracy, and the priesthood were supported, were looked upon as criminals and disturbers of God's eternal laws. One born great, or who had achieved greatness, or was greedy of greatness, scarcely regarded the little as his fellow creatures. They were only working machines, to be governed and kept quiet ; but for their sufferings, their aspirations, and their rights, no one cared a straw. It is true, a portion had voices in the elections of men who were called the representatives of the nation ; but the rich and the noble abused their ignorance to turn those voices against themselves, and they were the mere echoes of their masters' opinions, and their masters' prejudices, and the slaves of their masters' interests."

"And who do you mean to say were their masters ?" enquired Mr. Thornhill, in a sharp voice.

"The landholders—the great Borough-mongers, were their masters," answered Cosway. "Excuse me, Mr. Thornhill, I

mean not any personal allusion, for I believe you had no estates in those days. But science has made sad havoc with these remains of the Feudal system. Steam has broken down the barriers between class and class ; steam-printing presses, and steam-carriages have done more than ten revolutions towards destroying the idol worship which idleness long exacted as its due from honest labour—labour, that noblest of human attributes, which alone distinguishes the child of civilization from the savage. Money is a vast power, and the sons of labour were long passive slaves, for they were poor ; but knowledge is even a greater power than money, and is daily becoming its master. The slaves of labour are no longer ignorant of their own position, nor of ours.”

“Oh there is nothing to fear from the mob in this country,” said Mr. Thornhill, with a sneer ; “our institutions are too strong, and old, and venerable.”

“Many think, that some of them have

survived their time," said Cosway; "but I don't pretend to judge. But this I know, there must be parliamentary reform, and that before long, and we shall see strange things when the people's own representatives have the making of the people's laws. The impatient cries of democracy are no longer few and far between; they have become the universal clamour of nations, and they will never be hushed, till men are justly represented, justly taxed, and justly paid, and trade and religion are universally free. Here, at least, the rich can no longer lay a tax on the food of the poor for their own profit."

"Upon my word, you go very far, Cosway, when you know we are all conservatives and protectionists," said Sir Charles Trenton, who saw that several of his guests were greatly annoyed by Cosway's talking in a manner they were little accustomed to hear, and greatly inclined to resent.

"I think I have astonished these worthy

gentry," whispered the barrister in Mars-ton's ear, and then continued aloud, "I really beg pardon, if I have hurt any body's feelings; but I have not spoken my opinion as to who may be right, or who may be wrong; I have only stated, that we are living in one of those social revolutions, which have formed epochs in the history of mankind. All attempt to check its progress will be futile, and may be dangerous. The career of Providence is not to be arrested."

"This is dreadful doctrine, Cosway," said Sir Charles Trenton; "whilst you keep to politics, we can admire your eloquence in a bad cause; but if you meddle with religion—"

"The ladies would be shocked, no doubt!" cried Cosway, interrupting him with a laugh, "but the ladies have long ceased to listen, so I may venture to say, that priest-craft in this country, as well as in others, is bringing its long misused power to an end, by stupidly attempting

to oppose the progress of all knowledge, which does not emanate from itself. The first care of the clergy in this country is to maintain the power and the revenues of the Church, and the only education they wish to give the people is to teach them submission, and that the whole welfare of their poor lives, and the prosperity of the nation at large, depends upon the observance of Church discipline. In other nations, the priests are abetting tyrants, or promoting rebellion, as they see best for their own interests ; but every where, the sworn enemies of the progress of liberty of thought, their tyranny and their mutual disputes on doctrine, are rapidly teaching all nations, that the pure Christianity differs very widely from the general practice of those, who call themselves Christians?"

Mr. Thornhill had arisen, and stood before the fire, with his hands thrust in his side pockets, playing with the purse and pen-knife therein ; his face every moment be-

coming redder and redder, but he neither looked at Cosway, nor uttered a syllable. He was quite conscious, he could not command his temper sufficiently to answer such outrageous assertions in a becoming manner. Nothing but Cosway's being the descendant of a peer, and presumptive heir to an earldom, made him able to govern his indignation sufficiently, even to keep silence.

Sir Charles Trenton sipped his wine, and smiled blandly. He could not quite decide whether Cosway wished to amuse himself by enraging the country gentlemen, and alarming them as to the state of the nation; or whether he only professed such doctrines, to be silenced by a place under government; or whether, elevated by wine, he had betrayed his real sentiments. In either case, he considered such extravagant ideas only deserved a smile. The Baronet was too firmly encased in the pride and old prejudices of his class to perceive that there was any truth in Cosway's assertions.

Marston only agreed with many of his sentiments, for he was well acquainted with the wild passions and feelings which agitate the hearts of men, in that wide world of daily combat, beyond the circle of their narrow vision, who have only learnt to know human nature, in public schools, colleges, and clubs, where prejudices are implanted, and cherished as principles, from boyhood to old age, and vices, to the ordinary extinction of all noble passion, are cherished by luxury and selfishness.

But Marston, in his present position, was not free to express an opinion at variance with those of his employers. The artist, when he is even so fortunate as to enjoy the favour of the great sufficiently to be tolerated in their society, is only regarded as a dependent. It is the talent, not the man which is recognised. Personally he is despised. He is supposed to have neither opinions, nor feelings beyond the works of his art.

There was, therefore, a dead silence for a couple of minutes, after Cosway and Marston had exchanged a glance, which was materially understood.

“I seem to have frightened you all thoroughly,” said the barrister, then arising, and lounging before the fire for a few minutes, whilst he surveyed his legs and feet with evident admiration. “You may refute my doctrines, Sir Charles, in your next speech, against free-trade, and in the meantime, I will go to the ladies, and forget the decay of all human institutions, in the ever reviving charms of beauty. Marston, there is still light to take a stroll on the terrace, if you feel inclined.”

The artist arose, and they left the room together.

“What a puppy the fellow is!” exclaimed Mr. Thornhill, taking his place at the table again, with an evident increase of comfort, when he had seen these elements of disorder fairly out of the room. “The young men of the present day seem

to fancy they understand more than all the rest of the world put together."

"Push round that claret, Thornhill," said Mr. Smithson. "Let us have no more politics, for I consider them a most confounded bore."

CHAPTER IV.

The curse of Adam, the old curse of all.

I inherit in this feverish life

Of worldly toil, vain wishes, and hard strife,

And fruitless thought, in care's eternal thrall.

Hood.

It was near the end of September, and a lovely evening followed a day remarkably hot for the season. The full moon arose without a cloud, and poured a flood of light on the terrace before the windows of Easton Court, when Cosway and Marston entered the drawing-room. The creepers clinging thickly around the stone balus-

trades above the gardens, shone like silver in the quiet light, and the outlines of the tall, sharp cypresses, and thick-leaved laurels, came out distinctly against the thin, bright mist which veiled the distance. Not a breeze stirred the warm air, now fragrant with the odours of stocks and mignonette. Only a shaded lamp was burning on a small table in a recess ; and the ladies had all strayed out to enjoy the beauty of the night. Unfortunately, the nightingales were now silent, though they nightly made sweet chorus amidst the low shrubs beneath the terrace, during the fragrant evenings of spring, when ladies and gentlemen were all in London, passing the nights in the polluted air of crowded rooms, or gas-lit opera houses.

Taste and fashion are unaccountable things.

But the summer, and the roses were past, and so fashionable people were in the country.

The gay voice of Emily Carrington was

audible at the further end of the terrace. Her heart beat quicker, when she marked the figures of the two gentlemen on the walk. She had long been expecting Marston with impatience, anticipating the delight of having him near her, and of listening to his impressive voice, in the brilliant stillness of such a glorious night.

But by one of those caprices of feeling, common to men of large endowment, through whose hearts and brains a host of thoughts and sensations pass, during the time that an ordinary thinker has scarcely conceived a clear idea, he had no desire to meet Miss Carrington at that moment.

Cosway's recent conversation, and the spectacle of the beautiful tranquillity of nature, had indisposed him for the light jargon of flirtation ; and should the lady's humour be serious, he dreaded to trust himself so far, as to listen to her, or to give expression to the ardent feelings throbbing in his heart, at such a moment, and in such a scene.

All the illusions which, with the passionate warmth of his age and ardent temperament, he had allowed himself to indulge, in his intimate converse with the fascinating girl, since his residence at Easton Court—all the wild dreams of one day possessing her, which her coquetry had encouraged, and which, in spite of his better judgment, had almost exclusively occupied his mind, for some time past, had been rudely destroyed by the manner of Sir Charles Trenton, and that of most of his guests towards him, at that day's dinner party.

He was once more roused to the consciousness of the wide social barrier which existed between them. Moreover, the discourse of Cosway had conveyed to him the wholesome truth, that he was not more divided by the prejudices of the upper class, from the circle to which Miss Carrington belonged, than by his own views, and modes of thought. It seemed to him that she and all those, both men and

women, amongst whom she lived, looked at the world through a smoked glass, which rendered all but spots of brightness invisible ; whilst he extended his view over the wide universe, in all its changing variety of light and shade, alike cognizant of its imperfections and its beauties.

A chilling doubt of the possibility of Emily's loving a man, whom she saw regarded as an inferior, by all her own associates, deadened his heart, and reproaching himself, for his weak vanity in allowing himself to imagine that her coquettish gaiety was any evidence of preference, he determined to discard, at once, such folly from his mind ; and concentrate his thoughts and his talents, on the completion of the works he had come down to Easton Court to execute.

“And even if she loved me, Miss Carington is no wife for me,” he thought ; “she is brilliant and beautiful, but she wants the noble disinterestedness and strength of purpose of poor Kate D'Arcy. Yet who

can tell ! a strong attachment often first awakens the noble qualities of a woman's heart, and Emily, with her sensitive nature, may yet love passionately and devotedly, but not the poor painter !”

With a deep sigh at this conclusion, Marston turned away unobserved by his companion, as Cosway hurried forward to meet the ladies; and gliding down a flight of stone steps, wandered on amongst the thick evergreens, towards the margin of a small stream which was confined at one end by artificial rocks, so as to form a sheet of water.

The calm serenity of the landscape, where trees and grasses, and even the limpid waves seemed sleeping in the clear, pure moonbeams, formed a striking contrast to the scene of petty pride and passion he had so recently left; and, above all, with the restless activity and painful excitement of his own agitated mind.

As he paused and gazed around him, a deep sense of the beauty and grandeur of

creation, possessed his mind; he despised the littleness of those paltry, social distinctions which sometimes stung him to the soul; and the contemptuous insolence with which mediocrity had often inflicted wounds which, of late, had rankled in his heart.

But now, in this solitude, nature and truth, and the love of all things beautiful and just, once more regained undivided possession of his soul; and invigorated by that half hour of lonely converse with nature, as if he had drank the waters of a heavenly fountain, grand images thronged his mind; pictures such as he had never yet executed, arose before him, and he longed impatiently for the morrow, that he might give them a visible existence of form and colour.

No difficulties then dismayed him. He trusted that time and labour were alone wanting to make him a complete master of his art; and determined to bear down all obstacles, by the force of genius and perse-

verance, he forgot the hours of despondency which had frequently clouded his imagination, and unnerved his hand; and weary of the narrow converse with petty minds, he exulted in the hope of finding in his art a language in which his soul could hold communion with the universe.

Such moments of excitement, even with the man of genius, frequently bear no fruit; imagination is worthless in an artist, when not combined with other powers, necessary to the mechanical excellence of execution, and the knowledge and power of concentration, which enable the mind to elaborate with the patient labour of months, the brilliant conceptions of an hour.

Marston possessed these powers, and experience was gradually impressing on his mind the conviction, that he did so; and this knowledge was his best support amidst the trials and troubles, by which the difficult path of life he had chosen was beset.

Lost in such thoughts, he had entirely forgotten the party on the terrace, when he

was surprised by seeing, at a little distance before him, the white dress of a lady gleaming in the moonlight, as she sat alone on a bench near the water.

It was Lady Trenton.

Marston begged her not to be alarmed, and she at once recognised his voice. The tone was tremulous and low, in which she answered his salutation ; and then, after a minute's silence, she asked him to accompany her back to the house. Leonard could not see her face, but her voice betrayed that she had been weeping. She, the mistress of the luxurious mansion and lovely grounds, had stolen away from her guests to give vent, in secret, to the sorrow of her troubled heart.

The artist felt touched and awed by this discovery, and walked by the lady's side in silence. Her tears were a sad commentary, he thought, on what the world calls prosperity, which shines like a fair blossom, whilst the worm is gnawing at its core.

He wondered if such trials were heavier to bear than those of poverty ; and then the image of poor Kate D'Arcy, and her afflictions, and her patience, seemed to stand before him ; and the remembrance of Lady Trenton's debt to her flashed upon his mind, for the first time since he had been at Easton Court.

There, alone with the lady, without danger of interruption, such an opportunity for speaking to her on the subject might never occur again, and though slightly embarrassed, as to how he should commence, he resolved, at once, to fulfil the promise he had made to the silk-weaver's daughter.

But before he had decided how to begin, Lady Trenton herself addressed him.

She had pressed her handkerchief several times to her eyes, as they walked on in silence, till, stopping suddenly, she said,

“ I fear you think me a strange, foolish creature, Mr. Marston ; but I cannot, at once, master my feelings. I have, in truth,

more cause for tears than you or others may suppose ; but that concerns no one but myself—and, I trust in your generosity, not to betray, to any one, what you have seen.”

“I should be unworthy of your ladyship’s hospitality, were I capable of such baseness,” returned Leonard, in a voice of deep feeling, which appeared, at once, to re-assure his companion, for she immediately replied, with more composure,

“I thank you—I confess there is no other man, now at Easton Court, in whom I could place the confidence I now do in you. You are still young—*your* heart is fresh, and capable of noble sentiments ; but *they* are all hardened, selfish worldlings. Yes, every one of them ! Cosway, perhaps, less than the others ; but he has no fixed principles. He talks liberally—but, depend upon it, his own interest is the only star he follows. Don’t be deceived by appearances, Mr. Marston. Nobody is sincere in the great world ! even

I am always playing a part! and yet, oh God! how gladly would I be true. Nobody can be happy, who is not—no one can be happy who lives as I do, in a position, which continually jars against their feelings. Never be induced to act contrary to your own convictions, and your own nature. Be true to yourself, or you can expect truth from no man. A false position is the source of unutterable misery; and yet, how many in this vain world are struggling to maintain it, at the expense of principle, of feeling, and of fortune. Shun it, Mr. Marston, as you would the abyss of despair!”

Lady Trenton poured forth these words with a wild energy, so utterly at variance with her usual calm, fine lady manners, that the contrast was so terrible, as to awake, at once, the warmest commiseration.

It was the wailing cry of a weak creature, entangled in a net of torture,

from which there was no escape ; it was the lamentation of a broken heart, when all the fair delusions of girlish life had been cruelly destroyed, and neither hope nor confidence in man left as a solace. It was a voice of mourning from the desert, which many are destined to pass before God's holy love descends upon them, to cheer and guide the closing days of their pilgrimage.

"My art, which ever leads me back," answered Marston, "from the vanities of social life, to the contemplation of God's glorious works, will, I trust, never allow me to fall into the snare of worldly ambition. I know that even artists now-a-days are laughed at, as unpractical enthusiasts, who regard their profession as more than a means of gaining distinction and riches ; but I believe that the real destination of an artist can never be fulfilled, as long as he keeps such objects in view. He sinks into a sordid mechanic, and his

art becomes a trade, instead of being an interpreter between man and God's created works."

"With such feelings there are still dangerous temptations which may beset you," said the lady, "and take those forms the best calculated to beguile. Love, Mr. Marston! guard against its delusions—all smiles are not sincere."

"There, I am fortunate," answered Leonard, somewhat embarrassed by the turn the conversation had taken. "I am poor, and no one will think it worth the trouble to deceive me."

"You are handsome—you are clever, Mr. Marston," rejoined Lady Trenton, softly; "vanity delights in the admiration of such men. Be on your guard, and now—we are approaching the house, let us speak on other topics."

"If I might detain you a few moments longer," said the painter, "there is a question I would gladly be permitted to ask you, whilst we are alone."

“Lose no time then, for Miss Carrington and Cosway are coming towards us,” was her quick reply.

“Does your ladyship remember ordering a silk dress to be woven for you, by a poor girl, named D’Arcy, in Spital-fields?”

“Good heavens, what a strange question! To be sure I do! and I received it, and wore it at a Court ball. How can this concern you, Mr. Marston? Do you want to paint it?”

“Did your ladyship ever receive the poor girl’s bill, for that dress?”

“Yes, I sent for it!” answered Lady Trenton, more and more astonished.

“And may I venture to ask—did you pay it?”

“To be sure I did. Yes, I am quite certain; I sent her ten pounds.”

“You did not give it to the girl herself?”

“No, I never saw her, after I ordered

the dress, but I sent the money by my own maid, Clayton."

"She never received it!" was Marston's reply.

"That is most extraordinary."

"It is true."

"Ah! then my suspicions of that woman are well grounded," was all Lady Trenton had time to say, for Miss Carrington and her companion came down the steps at that moment, towards them.

Cosway was in high spirits, and rallied Lady Trenton, in his good humoured, witty way, upon her sentimental ramble with Mr. Marston. The lady laughed, and answered him as if no secret sorrow were lurking in her heart. Miss Carrington, on the contrary, spoke not a word. She was vexed that the artist had not joined her on the terrace; and, like a spoilt child, she resolved not to speak to him during the remainder of the evening.

Much to her mortification, Marston made no attempt, either to address her, or to

approach nearer to her ; and they walked the whole length of the terrace with Cosway and Lady Trenton between them. As they approached the drawing-room window, they were thrown suddenly together.

Emily stopped. She could no longer maintain her affected reserve, and was ready to cry with vexation.

“ Mr. Marston has quite forsaken me to-night,” she murmured, in a voice of reproach, as soon as the others were out of hearing.

“ You flatter me, exceedingly by noticing such a trifling circumstance,” returned Marston, with an emotion he vainly endeavoured to conceal ; “ I believed your attention was much more agreeably engaged.”

“ In what way ?” asked the girl, with her usual playful vivacity.

“ By men, whose position gives them a right to address you,” said Marston, gravely.

“ Oh, you are proud, are you ? I

guessed that was the reason," she returned, laughing, a low, soft laugh, which thrilled through the painter's heart. "I beg your pardon, but really such pride is very silly! You cannot pretend to say, that you really believe that I prefer Mr. Lesley's affected conversation to your fine flow of natural thoughts; or that I admire Cosway's flippancy, more than your imaginative language?"

"I never make such comparisons," replied Leonard, gravely.

"But you ought; you must know how we all admire you."

"As an artist," was the reply.

"As a friend," returned the girl, in a soft and tremulous voice; "indeed, I had persuaded myself," she continued, with her usual vivacity, "you were my very sincere friend. I have done battle for you a dozen times at least, and I cannot tell you how angry I have been at your leaving me, without mercy, to be bored to death by

all those self-conceited coxcombs, who are making love to my reputed fortune."

"Had I followed their example, I should no doubt have been treated with the same pretty contempt," replied the painter, laughing. "Now, having no wish to incur Miss Carrington's disdain, she must not be surprised, nor angry, for the future, that I treat her, with that respect due from me, to a ward of Sir Charles Trenton."

The expression of pride, with which these words were pronounced, was well understood by Emily. Though it commanded her esteem, it annoyed her vanity. She wished that a man should quite forget himself, in his admiration, or his love for her ; and she saw clearly, that it would be some time before she could bring Mr. Marston to this point.

"I am much obliged to you," she replied, in a tone of pique. "I am a particular admirer of such Chinese courtesy."

In her heart, Miss Carrington was exceedingly angry, and to take the worst revenge she could devise, she flirted the whole evening with Lesley. But Marston understood her object, and was not rendered jealous, although he sighed more than once, as her pretty laugh reached his ears, and he felt that his poverty compelled him to avoid the magic of her charms.

But his sterling, honest heart, soon reproved him for such weakness. Even there, in the midst of that luxurious drawing-room, and that fashionable society, he shook it off. He triumphed over this temporary regret, which admiration, not vanity, had engendered.

He looked around at the idle men, to whose pre-eminence in society he was obliged to submit; he remembered their satiety, their vapid inanity, their prejudices, their selfishness, and their utter dependence on the labours of others, for all their luxuries and pleasures—nay, even for the

means of daily life, and he remembered his own talents, and knowledge of all classes of society; and of many truths, which, by a sort of social compact, are hidden in the intercourse of the great by the varnish of humbug; he felt that knowledge is power, and he would not have exchanged his position, with any of the proud sons of the aristocracy.

It was one of those secret combats between the intellect and the passions, which the low-born youth, pre-eminently endowed, must pass through, and which decide, whether he is to be a slave or a freeman, for the rest of his existence. It was a struggle, dangerous to the triumph of Miss Carrington's supremacy, and though not final, it left deep traces in the painter's heart.

Whilst he was sitting apart in a shadowed recess, near the window, apparently forgotten by the whole society, a soft hand was laid upon his arm, and the low voice of Lady Trenton addressed him.

"Sit still," she said, as he arose from the sofa, "there is room enough for us both, and I want to inquire a little more about the affair of the silk gown. What you told me a little while ago, has pained and grieved me exceedingly. Are you sure of the truth of this story?"

"I would answer for it with my life," answered the artist.

"You know the girl, perhaps?"

"I have known her from my childhood," said Leonard. "I lost sight of her during my absence on the continent, and discovered her by accident lately in great distress, occasioned principally by her having purchased materials for weaving a dress, she told me, for which she had never been repaid."

"How shocking," murmured Lady Trenton. "Whenever I seek to do good, evil is sure to follow. The girl reproached me, no doubt, for my injustice, as she had cause to do?"

"Not at all," answered Marston, "she

believed that you had forgotten her, in the hurry of your many engagements."

"No, no, my heart is not so bad," said the lady, "not so entirely corrupted by selfish sorrows. Clayton, my maid, must have kept the money. How gladly would I have known this in London. But how very extraordinary it is, that you should be acquainted with this girl! Perhaps you will kindly undertake to remit her the money."

"With the greatest pleasure," answered Marston, who considered what he had himself given to poor Kate, as a gift.

"Should this young person have any further assistance necessary," continued Lady Trenton, "I request you will inform me of it ; in the meanwhile, I will trouble you to send her this ten pound note, which is her own, and five pounds in addition, as a compensation for the anxiety she has suffered."

Placing the money in the artist's hands,

the lady then arose, and joined a party assembled round the piano.

It was already late, and Marston, little disposed for society, retired unobserved, and sought his own chamber for the night.

When there, he thought much of poor Kate D'Arcy, and the difficulties of her position, now aggravated by her father's extraordinary state of mind. He wrote to her before he lay down to rest, and had enclosed her Lady Trenton's money, when some doubts occurred to his mind, as to the safety of sending the bank notes in a letter, without having first ascertained whether the D'Arcys were still in the house where he had last seen them. He wrote therefore a second letter, and directed it thither without the money.

In a few days this was returned to him with the words 'not to be found,' in red letters, on the back.

This gave the painter considerable uneasiness, for he took a sincere interest in poor Kate's destiny. Miss Carrington

might perhaps have been jealous, had she known how much he delighted to think of the companion of his childhood, for her image always came accompanied by the fresh feelings, and bright dreams of those days of innocence. The vanity, and ambition, and selfishness, which he daily encountered in his struggles with the world, were forgotten, as he thought of the poor girl's patient virtue, and the uncomplaining fortitude with which she passed on, uncontaminated, amidst poverty and labour, ever cheerfully performing the most painful duties.

Kate D'Arcy was, in fact, the personification of all the poetry of his early life ; and the anxiety he, at all times, felt for her welfare would have been greatly increased had he known that she was that night sleeping in a miserable garret, within a mile of him.

CHAPTER V.

And their degraded life is sunk so low,
With envy, every other state they view:
No record hath the world of this vile class,
Speak we no more of them, but look and pass.

DANTE.

THE morning after Lady Trenton had spoken with Marston about Kate D'Arcy, she declined joining in an excursion of pleasure made by her guests; and pleading a headache, retired to her own room. It was with a heavy heart, she heard the gay laughter beneath her window, as the ladies were assisted to mount their horses, by their respective cavaliers.

The voices of her husband and Emily Carrington were, above all, distinct and clear; and a deep sigh burst from her heart when, concealed behind a half-drawn curtain, she saw that Sir Charles permitted no one but himself to approach his ward; and that, as if it were a matter of course, she placed her little foot in his hand, and vaulted into her saddle.

It was Sir Charles Trenton who gathered up the reins, and placed them in her hold; it was Sir Charles Trenton who caressed the neck of her horse, and held its head, telling Cosway and Lesley, who stood looking on, to mount and ride forward, lest Miss Carrington's horse might start off, if they came behind her; and having thus got quietly rid of all rivals, he quickly mounted his own bay Arabian, and cantered away at her side, under pretence of taking proper care of her.

She heard Cosway cry out "upon my word, Trenton, you are a clever politician; but happily, the road is broad enough for

three," and, with these words, the barrister took his place at the left side of Emily, before Lesley, whom he left alone, was aware of his intention. All the party then putting their horses into a brisk trot, they soon afterwards disappeared amongst the trees.

Marston, in the meantime, was sitting at work in his painting-room; and he, too, as he raised his eyes from his canvass, and saw the brilliant sunshine on the fluttering trees, and the bright clouds flitting lightly over the sky, and heard the voices of the pleasure-hunters, felt a momentary pang.

He listened, almost unconsciously, till all was again silent, and then he sighed, as Lady Trenton had done. But there was no pang of jealousy in his heart, and a noble consolation at hand.

"This will last!" thought he, as he contemplated his work, "when their pleasure and my petty deprivations are all over and forgotten, this will still live. My thoughts will survive my brief existence."

How many a solitary and ardent mind has been cheered on to toil by such a hope!—vain, perhaps—and even if accomplished, never to be witnessed by him who forms it. But genius confides in its own strength, even when hope is silent.

In the full exercise of his mental powers, Marston soon forgot all but the beautiful work which was arising into existence beneath his pencil, and the hours glided on in his solitude, so happily, that even the pleasure seekers might have envied his enjoyment.

Very different was the manner in which Lady Trenton passed the day. Her first impulse, after the riders disappeared, was to cover her face with her handkerchief, and weep bitterly; nor was it till after the lapse of an hour, that she remembered the object for which she had remained at home.

After bathing her face with cold water,

and endeavouring to remove the traces of her tears, she rang the bell.

“Come in, Clayton,” she said, when her waiting maid appeared in answer to this summons. “Shut the door; I wish to speak with you.”

“Whatever your ladyship pleases,” replied the spoilt serving-woman, and she obeyed the command with a certain bustle, which showed that the tone of her mistress’s voice, though very gentle, had somewhat in it of displeasure, which offended her.

She was a middle sized, spare woman, about fifty, who had, probably, once possessed a pretty form and features, though she was now meagre and withered, and a very suspicious redness was diffused over her face. Her countenance assumed an expression of fawning servility, in the presence of her superiors; but with those of humbler rank than herself, and even with her equals, she laid this mask aside,

and avarice, cunning, and ill-temper, were fully displayed.

She enjoyed the reversion of all her mistress's cast clothes, and she rustled in silks, as she came and stood at the little table in front of the sofa, on which Lady Trenton was sitting.

As she had many enemies, and her conscience was perfectly aware of various misdeeds, she lived in the perpetual dread of detection, and was perfectly prepared, at all times, to meet any charges which might be made against her. Under the appearance of servility, she had long intimidated the gentle Lady Trenton, and convinced that she had rendered herself indispensable, by her skill in dress, and knowledge of certain domestic secrets, she had little fear of any accusations.

Never addressed by her superiors, except when a service was required of her, or a fault to be found, her feelings, her affections, her personal interests, and her

hopes, in this world and the next, unrecognised by those whom she was bound to obey, her whole existence, was passed in serving people for money, who treated her as a being with no duty on earth, but to perform their wishes, for the wages she received. Can it be wondered at, that such a degraded class, corrupted by luxury, without being morally strengthened by education, should have all the vices of slavery, without attachment or fidelity to their employers, and maintain, in secret, perpetual war against them for the advancement of their own interests, and the gratification of their own passions ?

Clayton was one of the worst of her class. Early vice had made hypocrisy necessary, to enable her even to earn her daily bread. Her heart had become callous for all but one being upon earth—the offspring of a youthful amour with a gentleman, who had first deserted, and then died, leaving ten thousand a-year to a daughter, born in matrimony, and not one sixpence to his

unacknowledged son. The only being on earth Mrs. Clayton had any affection for, was this son ; the only object she craved, was money ; and she went on gathering, by honesty and dishonesty, as much of this as she could possibly glean from the rich. Lady Trenton she had long robbed and laughed at. There was nothing she despised so much as gentle goodness.

Her mistress did not raise her eyes to the abigail's face, when she inquired if she remembered having received ten pounds from her, about two months before, to pay for the silk dress, which had been woven for her, by a poor girl in Spitalfields.

"To be sure I do, my lady," was the reply, "I remember it, as well as yesterday. The girl called, and brought a bill. I paid her in my own room ; and she gave me a receipt. I thought I gave it to you, my lady."

"You never did so, Clayton," said Lady Trenton, looking up with more courage,

“and I am sorry to say I yesterday discovered that you never paid the money.”

“Heaven preserve me ! who could have been so wicked, as to tell your ladyship such a falsehood !” ejaculated the woman, with well affected surprise ; though there was a look of uneasiness in her eyes, which would have excited strong suspicion of her guilt, in one of the detective police.

“I have been told this by a person of whose veracity I can have no doubt,” returned her mistress, now forgetting all her previous timidity in her indignation at this audacious assertion. “The girl has been reduced to the greatest misery, for the want of this money, which you have, I can no longer doubt, dishonestly appropriated ; and thus exposed me, to be considered, by those on whom I wished to confer a benefit, as both hard-hearted and unprincipled.”

“I am really surprised how your ladyship can be so ready to be imposed upon,” retorted Clayton, without further show of

submission. "But I know I have many enemies. It is impossible that a woman can stand up for the interest of her master and mistress, and the honour of her master and mistress, as I invariably do, without having a host of enemies. But I cannot bear to be suspected, I never would put up with it, in the best of families ; it wounds my feelings too deeply to be always supposing that people don't trust me—and I neither can, nor will bear it ; and so I feel obliged to say at once, your ladyship must suit yourself at your ladyship's earliest convenience."

"Very well, Clayton," was the reply. "The sooner you leave this house the better, after what has passed, unless you can produce the girl's receipt for the ten pounds."

"I have no doubt I can find it directly," returned the waiting-maid, wiping away her pretended tears, "but your ladyship must not expect that I shall stay for all that. I am not going to put up with

being called a thief, and told I am a liar, and all for nothing at all."

"I desire to hear no more of this language," said Lady Trenton, with infinite dignity. "Leave me, Clayton. Your wages will be paid by the steward, but I have no further necessity for your services."

"Perhaps not!" answered the woman, every muscle of her neck swelling with rage, "but I have something more to say to your ladyship; and I must tell you that if you have no more gratitude, after my faithful services of ten years, than to turn me out of the house, at a minute's warning, on account of a parcel of lies and slanders about a worthless beggar, I don't think myself bound to secrecy any longer, about some little private affairs of the family, about which I happen to know rather more than your ladyship does yourself, I believe."

"Good heavens! what do you know?" demanded Lady Trenton, at once forget-

ting her dignity, in her harassing anxiety concerning an affair, which had embittered many of the last years of her life.

“Oh yes! I suppose your ladyship expects me to tell you everything at once, no doubt, after I have been so shamefully insulted; but I would have you to know I am not a woman to be trodden upon. Your ladyship does not know me half so well as I know your ladyship and all your ladyship’s affairs, and perhaps if you guessed what I could say, if I pleased, you would not be so anxious to hear it neither! Sir Charles can tell you, my lady; he knows all about it, as well as I do! but Sir Charles is a real gentleman, and I am sure he would never treat a faithful servant with ingratitude.”

At this mention of her husband, the poor lady trembled from head to foot. She felt that her worst and most secret apprehensions—terrors which she had shrunk from acknowledging, even to herself, were about to be confirmed, and shouted in her ears, by the

lips of a vulgar serving woman, and with the delicacy of a highly refined and sensitive mind, she determined, if possible, to prevent such disclosures.

“Peace woman!” she exclaimed, with an energy which astonished the hardened creature, who had long believed she governed her, “you dare to insult me because I am alone ; but were my husband here, he would quickly free me from your insolence ! again, I tell you, leave this room, and this house.”

“Your husband indeed !” cried Clayton, in a loud voice, “every body knows he cares little enough for you. He has enough to do in dancing after other and younger ladies.”

“Silence !” exclaimed Lady Trenton, in a stern voice, and she herself arose to leave the room.

Clayton turned, and continued in a louder tone, and with increased violence, as her mistress proceeded towards the door—

“If I must leave this house, branded as a thief and a liar, I shall tell you first of all, that there are people who are greater thieves and liars than I am, for if I steal in a small way, they rob by wholesale, and live like princes all their days on other people’s money. Ask Sir Charles what he has to say to that! That’s all.”

“Is the woman mad!” were Lady Trenton’s hurried words, as she laid her hand on the lock of the door, and looked back, with terror, on the flushed face of Clayton, whose affection for brandy she never even suspected.

“No, my lady, I am not mad,” she began in the same insolent tone as before; but her voice seemed at once to fail her, when the door was thrown open, and, to her utter astonishment, Sir Charles Trenton stood before her.

“What does all this mean?” demanded the baronet, glancing with a look of extreme surprise and displeasure, from his

wife, to the enraged waiting maid. Clayton was not to be daunted.

"My lady was accusing me of theft and lies," she cried. "Yes, of theft, and I know not what beside, and has ordered me out of the house, at a minute's notice. It is very cruel and very hard upon me, after my long and faithful services, to be sent out of the house, at a minute's notice, without a character. It must be my ruin."

"I rejoice that you have come," said Lady Trenton to her husband. "You can deal with this woman better than I can. I have detected her in stealing, and when I gave her warning, she has replied with insupportable insolence."

"Go, go, my lady," said Sir Charles, making a sign for his wife to leave the room, "I did not expect to find you so far forgetful of your proper dignity, as to descend to squabble with your waiting woman."

"Nor would you, but for her unparalleled violence," replied the lady, and she

blushed deeply at her husband's unjust reproof. "She has completely forgotten her position, and has made accusations which you will do well to call upon her to explain."

"Go, my lady, I request of you," returned Sir Charles with sneering civility, "when you are more calm, we can talk of this matter; in the meantime, leave Clayton to me."

Although habituated to such language, when alone, till she had become almost callous to it; her husband's calm impertinence to her, in the presence of her offending servant, stung Lady Trenton to the very soul; and hurrying away to conceal the tears she could not restrain, she retreated to her bed-room, and Sir Charles shut the door behind her.

"Good heavens, for what am I reserved?" she exclaimed, as she sunk down on a sofa, and burst into passionate weeping. All her long and patient sufferings, when her young heart had been wounded and agonized by

the pangs of unrequited affection; the gnawing unrest of jealousy; the mortification inflicted by the neglect, and cold and sneering contempt of him who owed her love, and honour, and protection; all her untold sorrows and hidden sufferings seemed concentrated into those minutes of overwhelming grief, and she wept—as even women seldom weep. She could no longer disguise from herself the horror of her position; she no longer forgot, as she had long striven to forget, in the bustle of dissipation, the desolation of her life; she saw before her the whole depth of her despair, and felt that death would be preferable to the future which awaited her.

At length, exhausted by her agony, her tears ceased to flow. A sternness crept over her spirit, which had hitherto formed no part of her gentle nature. Her long love—her patient attachment to her husband was suddenly destroyed. All the delusions of life were, for ever, annihilated; but a new hope gave her strength to sup-

port the worst that could befall her ; and that hope was—the hope of death !

As soon as Sir Charles Trenton found himself alone with Mrs. Clayton, he turned round and fixed his eyes upon her face, with a look of searching and commanding assurance, before which even this audacious woman quailed. When he flung himself into an easy chair, the culprit stood trembling before him ; although he had not uttered a syllable.

He took out a pen-knife, and began to arrange his nails.

“ Well, Mrs. Clayton,” he said, at length, “ what have you been about ? ”

“ Nothing of any consequence whatever, Sir Charles, I assure you,” returned Clayton, submissively. “ Somebody has been telling lies to my lady, about my keeping back a ten pound note, she gave me to pay for a silk dress ; and that is the whole business.”

“ And you never do such things ? ” enquired the Baronet, casting a quick upward

glance at the woman's face, which at once, convinced him of her guilt.

"I am sure, sir, you know I have no occasion," she stammered, "since you behave so very handsome to me."

"And you told your lady that, did you?"

"La! sir, no! I just said a few words to frighten her; but I never betray trust."

"So, Mrs. Clayton, you have been blabbing, have you! I expected as much!" rejoined her master. "How much did you think it consistent, with your engagements, to betray of a business with which you have no more concern than my pen-knife?"

"Oh, Sir Charles," said the woman, more terrified by her master's calm sneers, than if he had reproached her with the violence of passion, "I hope you know my fidelity too well to suspect I would say anything to compromise you in any kind of way."

"Compromise me, woman! no insolence to me! Your lady may perhaps submit to be insulted by you, but I do not! No

prevarication, I command. What have you said ? If you don't tell me the truth, Lady Trenton will. I give you that warning, if you are sober enough to understand me."

"Lord, Sir Charles, I am sober as the day I was born ! I only said, if my lady knew how faithfully I had served her, she would not be so ready to believe all the false charges my enemies brought against me ; but that she had better ask you, Sir Charles, for you knew how much I deserved to be trusted, and would tell her more than she knew at present."

"Fool !" cried the baronet with indignation. "Had I not warned you enough, against such blabbing ? But women can never hold their tongues, especially when they get squabbling with one another."

"I beg your pardon, Sir Charles, I am really very sorry, but my lady put me in a passion, that is the truth of it, and I hardly knew what I said," was Clayton's humble answer.

“I suppose you had also taken a little too much brandy,” was Trenton’s bitter reply, and he got up and paced the room with hurried strides. His arms were folded on his breast, and his brows knit in deep and troubled thought. Those who had only seen the man of the world, exerting his powers of fascination, in a brilliant drawing room, would have failed to recognize him now, when the mask was thrown aside, and his features distorted by dark and subtle thoughts.

“You are sure you said nothing more?” he at length demanded, stopping abruptly before the waiting maid, and fixing his piercing eyes upon her.

“Nothing, I assure you, sir! you can very well suppose I was not likely to risk offending you, just at the moment my lady was turning me out of the house. “I am not such a fool as to wish to ruin myself altogether.”

“There is some truth in that,” replied her master, after resuming his seat. “And

this squabble with your lady—it is an awkward business, Mrs. Clayton, and had better have been avoided. Is it absolutely necessary that you should leave her service ?”

“I don’t wish it, indeed sir,” said the woman, with recovered courage ; “but you must understand that if my lady persists in considering me little better than a common thief, I cannot possibly stay.”

“And what then do you propose doing ?”

“I am getting old, sir, for another place,” replied the artful jade ; “the little sum you pay me is not enough for me to live on, out of service, without help. It is not my fault if I am sent away, and my character taken from me, and I think the least I have a right to expect, is to have my wages paid, with a little more for board.”

“That is a good deal, upon my word,” said the baronet, “and I tell you frankly it is more than I am disposed to give. You must stay where you are ; I cannot agree to your going from under my own eye. You have proved to day the folly of trusting a

woman with a secret, and I tell you candidly, I can no longer place entire reliance on your discretion."

"Very well, sir, just as you please. I have always been quite satisfied with you, and with my place; and provided my lady makes me an apology—"

"Confounded cool, to be sure!" cried Sir Charles, laughing sarcastically. "I take it that if you mean to stay in this house, you must make Lady Trenton an apology, for your very unpardonable insolence."

"That is quite impossible!" replied the waiting woman, with recovered flippancy. "Were I to make an apology to my lady, it would be exactly the same thing as to say I was guilty; and that I neither can nor will submit to do, for her, nor you, nor anybody. I am innocent, sir, positively innocent, and Lady Trenton must be made to understand that. I paid the girl for the gown! and that is a fact!"

“Have you a receipt to show for the money?”

“There is my misfortune, sir; by some mischance I have lost, or burnt it!”

Sir Charles Trenton laughed aloud.

“Very unlucky, indeed, Mrs. Clayton,” he said. “So I presume, you have nothing but your own word, to prove your innocence!”

“And that ought to be enough, after ten years’ service! and if it is not enough, I tell you plainly, sir, I cannot stay in this house another night; and if you cannot afford to keep me decently, I can find other people who will think it well worth their while to pay me handsomely. You may do just what you think best.”

“Upon my word, Mrs. Clayton, you are a woman of spirit;” answered her master.

“I cannot possibly do without you, and I must try what can be done. Where is the girl to be found, to whom you paid this money?”

“I don’t remember her name, and it is

no manner of use looking after her, it is months ago," replied the abigail in evident perturbation.

"Oh, I have no desire in the world to take any trouble about the matter," was the Baronet's reply, "only I thought it might be for your interest, if this money could be sent to her. If I knew where she was to be found, I would take that upon myself; it would effectually silence her, for the future."

"You are very kind, Sir Charles," answered Mrs. Clayton with a curtesy, "but I really do not know where she lives. The porter always spoke to her, in London, and you know, sir, he was sent away, when we left. I will try to find her out, when we go back to town, sir, and really, till then, it can be of no consequence."

"Very well, that is your affair, not mine," returned the baronet. "In the meantime, you must try to do away with any foolish suspicions, you may have ex-

cited in Lady Trenton's mind. Anything you may have said, is really in itself of no consequence whatever; only, in her delicate state of health, I am anxious to spare her all uneasiness ; I will go, and speak to her about your remaining, and remember, Mrs. Clayton, there must be no more of these scenes for the future. I may find it necessary, if I am further annoyed, to cut short your allowance."

So saying, Sir Charles Trenton arose and left the room.

"So you will cut short my allowance, will you," muttered the woman to herself, as soon as her master had departed, "then it will be the wisest plan for me to cut short your fortune first, and get something from other people, for my services. It is too bad, if I am to be kept under that fellow's thumb, all my life, and he treating me like the dust he treads on, and talking of my drinking brandy! He could make me civil speeches once ; but now, nobody goes down but that baby face, Miss Carrington."

ton, and it is clear to me that if my lady died to-morrow, he'd marry her before the year was out, to keep the fortune in his hands. I must be better used, or I'll put an end to that scheme. It is lucky for us, poor servants, when we can get hold of a few secrets, for without that we are thought no more of, than galley slaves."

ON leaving Clayton, Sir Charles Trenton proceeded at once to his wife's room. Lady Trenton heard and recognized his approaching footsteps ; but her agitation had already subsided, and she had chosen her part. Nothing could provoke her

more to anger. The quick feelings of her sensitive heart, were crushed and deadened for ever.

Even Sir Charles was struck by her extreme pallor, and her passive tranquillity, when he approached her. There was something awful in her breathless stillness.

The Baronet was perfectly aware that the protection he had extended to her insolent servant, was the cause of this ; but though he would himself most gladly have sent Mrs. Clayton out of the house, with all despatch, he did not venture to set her at defiance. He knew, as he had insinuated to his wife, that she was acquainted with a circumstance, which he was most unwilling should be published to the world, and, in order to make sure of her secrecy, this proud man was compelled to submit to the imperious vulgarity, and exacting humours, of a worthless domestic.

Yet, he could not tell Lady Trenton this. He could not breathe the secret of

the power which mastered him, to any creature upon the face of the earth ; and haunted by the perpetual fear of disclosures, which he had made many sacrifices to prevent, he lived in a state of constant torment, and had gradually learnt to hate his unfortunate wife, whom he unjustly regarded as the cause of all his anxieties.

Her pale and ghastly countenance, therefore, awakened no pity in his heart, although he looked at her in silence, for some moments after his entrance, as if he expected she should be the first to speak. But she neither looked up, nor uttered a syllable.

“ Well, my lady,” he said, at length, “ you ask me no questions, but I am happy to tell you, I have arranged your little dispute with Clayton. She has been falsely accused—whoever may have been her accuser—and there can be no doubt, that such being the case, it would be cruel to send her away. I have spoken with her, and I find she is quite willing to remain,

provided you make her some kind of apology, for having accused her so unjustly, and sought, as she say, to take her character away."

"I make an apology to my own insolent, and abandoned waiting-maid!" exclaimed the astonished lady; "surely, I cannot have heard you aright."

"You must feel the propriety of doing so, when I assure you of her innocence," was the Baronet's reply.

"I have heard her guilt from authority equally strong," was his wife's calm, rejoinder.

"And who may your informant have been?" enquired Sir Charles, sarcastically.

No answer was returned. Lady Trenton was resolved, at all hazards, not to bring Marston into any difficulty by betraying his name.

"This is strange—very strange," said Sir Charles; "but the matter is not worth dispute. I leave you at liberty to keep your secret, if it be worth the trouble, so

long as you obey my command. You are still silent, Lady Trenton! am I to understand that as an evidence of resolute opposition? But beware, madam—I warn you to beware, before it is too late. Such obstinate folly can serve no other purpose than to provoke mischief and dissension.”

“There is, then, a mystery to be disclosed, as this vile woman threatened,” replied Lady Trenton, fixing her eyes on her husband’s face with searching enquiry. I am sorry if you have placed yourself at the mercy of such a worthless creature. I have not! and this only affords me an additional reason for refusing to retain her in my service.”

“Madam,” said Sir Charles, sternly, “you are as much in her power, as I am; and after the farce of duty and submission to my pleasure, which you have so long played before the world, I have a right to demand the reality, for once. It is my pleasure that the woman, Clayton, whether

justly or unjustly accused, remain in this house, and in your service."

"In your service—not in mine."

"By Heavens, madam, you irritate me beyond all bearing!" exclaimed the Baronet, actually stamping with rage. "If you imagine, because, in spite of all your follies, and extravagance, I have hitherto treated you with forbearance, in order that my wife might not be made a subject of ridicule for her vanity and imbecility—if you suppose, on this account, that I am likely to submit to your dictation, you are egregiously mistaken. I tell you, once for all, my will must be obeyed, on this, and every other occasion, when it is my pleasure to exact your submission, or a storm may burst over you, which you little anticipate."

"It cannot injure me," replied the lady, in a voice of tranquil despair. "I am prepared for all things now."

"What, has that woman betrayed the secret after all?" exclaimed Sir Charles,

for a moment thrown off his guard by the calm fortitude of his wife.

“ You know me little,” she said, “ notwithstanding our long years of marriage, if you imagine that I would listen to any accusations against my husband from the lips of a menial! Be assured that I neither do, nor will know anything, which that vile woman has to communicate. If you are in her power, pay her well to keep silence to the world, for such creatures are always to be bought ; but spare yourself and me the humiliation of her remaining under our roof.”

“ By heaven, madam, this obstinacy is not to be borne!” cried Trenton, his eyes flashing, and his hands clenched with rage. “ Oh, I forswear all trust in your sweet women! they are the only true Devils when you thwart them! If Clayton leave this house, madam, you, or I must leave it likewise. There is no alternative, and surely you, who spend your life in courting the favour of the world, must see

the madness of giving it such a theme for scandal at your expense."

"I make you no reproach, I wish no contention," said Lady Trenton, fixing her eyes on her husband. "Neither do I make any further appeal to your sense of what is due to me, as your wife! I have long known I never possessed your affection. I had become accustomed to your indifference, but I expected at least your respect and forbearance. The last delusion I still cherished, you have now destroyed; but be it so!"

"You are eloquent, madam!" said the Baronet, with a smile of bitter sarcasm.

Lady Trenton took no notice of this sneer, and proceeded—

"I am fearfully convinced there must be some terrible secret in this woman's keeping, affecting either your interest or your reputation, or you would not have insisted on my submitting to the humiliation of retaining her in my service. Harsh as you have been to me, I cannot believe that

your conduct proceeds from the mere love of tyranny, and if you command I must submit, without asking further explanations."

"You do well," replied Sir Charles, sternly. "I have no further explanations to give; but that I believe this woman to be a faithful and honest servant, and I am determined to be master in my own house. Your Ladyship's smiles may delude others; but you are perfectly right in supposing they have never made a fool of me."

With this cold sarcasm, the Baronet left the room.

There had been a time when Lady Trenton would have wept bitterly, after such a scene; but her tears were now dried up, never more to flow for the man who had been the first and only object of her affection. She sat long, motionless as a statue, on the spot where he had left her. She was like one stunned, and it was only by slow degrees that her mind became capable of recalling all that had passed.

Though her sufferings, in consequence of her husband's conduct towards her, had long been very acute, her standard of a wife's duty was so high, that no complaint had ever escaped her lips. She had no sympathizing confidant to publish her domestic secrets to the world. Her parents were long dead; Miss Carrington was her only relative; and now, in this great trial, she had no person to whom she could turn for consolation and advice. There is no being upon earth so lonely as a faithful wife whose affection is unrequited by her husband. One engrossing passion has cut her off from all other human sympathy, and has even made her attachments worthless in her estimation. Though her heart is yearning for affection, she has lost the power of loving any but the man who has requited her heart's devotion with ingratitude.

Lady Trenton was first aroused from the stupor of her despair, by the return of the riding-party; and a feeling of inexpressible

agony made her heart once more beat with violence, when she distinguished her husband's voice laughing and talking, as if no circumstance had occurred to disturb his tranquillity.

But she shed no tear, neither did she go to the window to feed her sorrow by the spectacle of his attentions to Emily Carrington. She felt almost with rejoicing, that she should soon be removed from their path; and only anxious to conceal her humiliation from the world, during the brief remains of her existence, she resolved to exert herself to the utmost, to behave with becoming cheerfulness in the society of her guests.

She bathed her throbbing temples, she arranged her disordered hair, and then giving a slight touch of rouge to her pallid face, she descended to the drawing-room, with her usual placid smile and calmly elegant manner, to play the farce of hospitality.

She learnt from the conversation of the

company, that her husband's sudden return home, and appearance in her morning room, had been occasioned by the accidental lameness of his horse, which had compelled him to desert the party, before they had passed the park gates.

Every one of the company was engrossed by some selfish pursuit ; some flirting ; some playing billiards ; some reading ; and the idlers earnestly discussing the events of the morning ; so that Lady Trenton's depression of spirits, which she vainly endeavoured to overcome, was unobserved by all, except Marston. But the painter was too much accustomed to watch the changes of the human countenance, not to perceive that the shadow of the heart's despair, had darkened her spirit, and taken all lustre from her mournful eyes.

When he looked at her, he understood, at once, that something terrible had occurred ; and a furtive glance of Sir Charles Trenton, at his wife, betrayed to him that the Baronet was the author of her suffering.

That day, before dinner, Mrs. Clayton presented herself, as usual, at her lady's toilet. When she found that her services were not rejected, she had the audacity to say that she rejoiced to find that her lady was convinced of her innocence; but no answer was returned; and though she continued thenceforward to perform, as formerly, the duties of her office, Lady Trenton never addressed her, either by word or look.

There was something so imposing in her calm and placid dignity, that even the audacious Clayton felt humbled in her presence; and after addressing her twice, without receiving any answer, she performed her services in respectful silence.

But, conscious of her guilt, she was more mortified and enraged by this treatment, than she would have been had she been sent at once from the house; and she complained bitterly to Sir Charles, of his wife's shameful treatment of her.

The Baronet put a sovereign into her

hand, and told her that a woman of her sense ought to despise such nonsense ; but he judged it best, to take no further notice of the matter to Lady Trenton, trusting, that as long as Clayton remained in the house, he had nothing to fear from her.

Had this woman been influenced by the love of money alone, it is probable that this opinion would have proved correct ; but she was of a capricious and violent character, habituated, little by little, to the use of strong drinks, during her long nights' watchings, when her mistress was spending the hours of repose in London parties, till the indulgence had become a positive vice ; avaricious and greedy, yet the slave of her unacknowledged son's extravagance, no reliance whatever could be placed, either on her fidelity, or her discretion.

Miss Carrington, in her thoughtless gaiety, knew nothing of the deep sorrow that was preying on her cousin's heart,

and least of all suspected that there was anything remarkable in Sir Charles Trenton's attentions to herself. She was surrounded by admirers ; new amusements were devised, and daily put into execution ; she took the smiles of those around her, as proofs of content, and certain of pleasing, whenever she sought to do so, she seemed to forget that life was ever chequered, either by care, or disappointment.

Lesley became daily more open and devoted in his attentions to her, though her evident preference for Marston's society, made him hesitate to make any open declaration of his attachment.

Though Cosway felt certain of the son of a dry-salter's being refused by the proud heiress, he nevertheless, with a certain spirit of mischief, natural to him, encouraged him to persevere, at the same time, endeavouring to excite his jealousy of the painter ; partly by way of amuse-

ment, and partly from a selfish calculation that when both had failed, he might step in, and carry off the prize.

Yet it must be admitted that Cosway's love of Emily Carrington was as strong and sincere as by his nature and habits he was capable of feeling ; and he was perfectly persuaded that he was the only man, of all her acquaintance, who was a proper match for her, or at all likely to make her happy.

It was true he was only a briefless barrister, without fortune. But then he had connexions; and connexions, in England, when a man has the talent to know how to use them, are almost equal to an inheritance. Moreover, there was some chance of his one day inheriting an earldom ; and he had very serious promises from a relative, high in office, of being shortly provided for, by an honourable government post. On all this he very patiently built his hopes of his own future success with the heiress.

He looked upon Emily's attachment to Marston, as a mere freak of girlish romance ; and never believed for a moment that a girl of family and fortune, would seriously think of marrying an artist. Without appearing to interfere, he made her feel, in a thousand ways, the impossibility of her forming such a connexion.

Marston fully understood the hatred and jealousy, which Lesley, since their very first meeting, had cherished against him ; but it had never occurred to his mind, that his volatile and apparently careless friend, Cosway, was really his rival.

Emily Carrington's visits to the painting-room, had become so completely a matter of course, that the artist was incapable of work, till the sound of her light footsteps, crossing his threshold, had set his anxious expectations at rest ; and when she was recalled to join the company in the house, or to fulfil some engagement in the neighbourhood, he felt, as if the sunshine had passed away from his eyes ; and he was

regarding a cheerless gloom, which only her presence could dispel. Passion was gradually gaining the victory over principle, and, day by day, he thought less of the manifold obstacles which divided him from the beautiful heiress, and more of her charms, and evident preference for himself.

Vanity is man's weak point quite as much as woman's ; and Marston would have been too perfect for human nature, had he been without a certain portion of it ; and this portion, the fair coquette well knew how to enlist in her cause. Smarting under the mortifications which were daily inflicted on him, by the fine guests at Easton Court, her gentle and almost child-like attentions had a healing charm, and affected him doubly by their contrast to the impertinence of others. Many gentle words of kindness, simply, and as it were, almost unconsciously uttered by the lovely girl, fell like seeds of love into his heart, there to bear countless blossoms.

Unfortunately, his uncle was, at this time, absent in London on business, so that he was then deprived of a wise counsellor, to whom he could have communicated the whole story of the temptations which beset him, and the struggle going on in his own heart. Yet, still he had strength of mind to refrain from betraying his feelings to Emily, until he had an opportunity of consulting his venerable relative.

Sometimes he felt his old conviction, of the folly of yielding to this attachment, and arose, with a zealous resolution of working hard, so as to finish the pictures for Sir Charles Trenton, with all speed, and be free to escape from the dangerous fascination, which too frequently distracted his thoughts, rendered him incapable of exercising the full powers of his genius, and could alone end in mortification and disappointment.

In pursuance of this resolution, he was one morning busily employed at his easel ;

visions of his art thronged once more bright, and vivid upon his mind, and his faculties, again aroused, put forth their full vigour, and brought content and exultation with their healthful exercise, when the train of his fancies was suddenly broken off by a slight tap at his door.

Miss Carrington never tapped, and it was long past the hour when she usually visited him ; a party having gone with her that morning on an excursion to the sea-side.

The artist was somewhat annoyed at being thus interrupted, when he had everything ready for work, and hastily cried "Come in" without even laying aside his pencils.

His surprise was very great when, in another moment, Lady Trenton entered, and softly closed the door. It was the first visit she had ever paid to the painting-room, although her manner to Marston had been studiously gentle and kind, ever since they became acquainted in Rome;

and she had treated him with marked attention whilst a guest under her own roof.

He knew that she had no great taste for painting, and his curiosity, as to the reason of her visit, was proportionably great.

CHAPTER VII.

Beauty lives a day and dies ;
Mirth's a cheat, and pleasure flies.
Is there nothing worth our care ;
Time, and chance, and death, our foes ?
If our joys so fleeting are,
Are we only tied to woes ?
Let bright virtue answer, no :
Her eternal powers prevail.

COWPER.

MARSTON hastily arising, apologised for his rudeness, as soon as he recognised his hostess, and would, at once, have laid aside his pencils, but the lady insisted on his resuming his seat, and going on with his work.

“Pray don’t let me interrupt you,” she said, in a low, soft voice. “I will take a chair beside you, and you must continue to paint, for I have not come to criticise your work; but to have a little private conversation with you, whilst all the rest of the party are absent; and we need have no fear of interruption.”

“Your ladyship flatters me exceedingly,” began the artist.

“No compliments, I beg, Mr. Marston,” she rejoined. “What I have to say, is, I believe, interesting to us both, and it is absolutely necessary that we should speak frankly and sincerely to each other. From all I have seen of you, I am convinced I can place perfect reliance on your honour and discretion.”

“If I can in any way serve you, I shall be delighted to do so,” replied the artist, greatly astonished by being addressed in this confidential manner by his hostess. He looked at her, as he spoke, and was shocked to perceive how much her person

had changed since they last spoke intimately together, concerning the affair of Kate D'Arcy. His face probably betrayed his feelings, for the lady said, as if in answer to them—

“ Yes, a few days have done sad havoc to the outward form, but the unseen ruin is incurable. I have lived fearful days during the last week, Mr. Marston. Yet I came not here to talk of myself; my doom is fixed, and no power on earth can avert its speedy accomplishment. I came, if possible, to secure the happiness of another, and you must assist me in the work.”

“ You astonish me every moment more and more,” was all the painter could reply.

“ No doubt you think me imprudent, foolish, and distracted; and indeed I sometimes fear I am on the brink of madness; but it will soon be over. My ties to life are all broken; I have ceased to heed the nimadversions of society, and after a long

combat, I have resolved to follow, for once at least, the impulse of my feelings, and speak openly to you. But do not mistake me ; I came to speak to you of my cousin and ward, Emily Carrington ; but entirely without her knowledge. You start, Mr. Marston ! I see by your heightened colour, I am not deceived ! You love her !”

“ Good heavens, Lady Trenton !” exclaimed the young man, almost dropping his pencil from his trembling fingers, “ I was not prepared for this.”

“ I am well aware you were not,” said the lady, “ but I have watched the progress of your attachment, and the honourable pride with which you have endeavoured to master it. I have watched also the heedless coquetry, with which my cousin has encouraged you ; and I have determined, that, as far as I have the power, the happiness of an honest man, whom she has led on to hope for her love, shall not be sacrificed to her vanity.”

“ If I have been mad enough to form presumptuous hopes,” answered Marston, with grave tranquillity, “ it is fitting I should bear the punishment of my folly. My position in society, does not justify my aspiring to the hand of Miss Carrington.”

“ But Emily’s behaviour to you, whilst in this house, does justify your doing so! It is needless to deny the fact.”

“ She is perhaps scarcely conscious of the construction which may be put upon her conduct.”

“ I admit, that she is probably not aware of the extent of the danger she has been dallying with ; but I am also fully persuaded, that she is more interested in you than in any other of the men who court her. Be candid, Mr. Marston—you are also of this opinion.”

“ I confess I have endeavoured vainly not to think so,” replied the artist. “ I confess I have found it impossible to remain insensible, when daily exposed to the fascination of a being so charming as Miss

Carrington. For an artist to regard such beauty with indifference, is almost impossible."

"Oh, yes! I knew, with your quick feelings and ardent imagination, you must love her!" exclaimed Lady Trenton, whilst an expression almost amounting to exultation flashed from her dark and hollow eyes. "You love her sincerely—you love her for herself alone, and she must be your wife!"

"These are strong words, Lady Trenton!" returned Marston, suddenly laying aside his palette and his pencil, and arising with extreme agitation from his seat. "I trust you have reflected wisely before you came hither to expose me to such an ordeal."

"That I have thought long, and struggled much," she said, mournfully, "my pale and wasted form gives sufficient evidence. Time only can decide, whether any of us reflect wisely. I have sought to do the best in my power, not for my own happiness, but if possible to rescue another from

sorrow and trials, which, after my death, must otherwise be her inevitable portion. That other is Emily Carrington. Perhaps from what you have seen of us both, you are surprised at this. You have hitherto believed I bore her little love. But if it is so—appearances have deceived you ; I do more than love, I pity her.”

“Miss Carrington is the last person in the world, I should have supposed deserving of pity,” said Leonard, whilst he continued to watch the changing and excited countenance of Lady Trenton, with intense curiosity and interest.

“Oh! yes, Mr. Marston, I pity her with my whole heart, when I see the servility, and flattery, with which designing men pursue her, whilst they care for nothing but her rich inheritance. I pity her because she may one day be the victim of their falsehood, may be made the prey of designing avarice, and when her gold is won, be cast off with scorn and insult. I

pity her, because flattery makes her selfish, by its idolatry; weakened in soul and body by vanity and luxury, as I have been, she too must suffer fearfully, when awakened by neglect, to the realities of life. Nothing can save her from such a destiny, but a speedy marriage to an honest man. She loves you, I believe, as much as she is, at present, capable of loving, for no sorrow has yet aroused in her the full strength of passion. You must cherish that love, and stand between her, and the temptations of folly, vanity, and ambition."

"But granting, Lady Trenton, that your idea of her attachment to me is just," returned the young man, with solemn earnestness, "there are still too many obstacles to our union, for me to encourage the slightest hope of its possibility. Miss Carrington's beauty, her family, her wealth, her position in society, entitle her to a brilliant marriage, and should she become the wife of a poor artist, she might, in

after life, repent the sacrifice she had made, in marrying a man, who possesses none of these advantages.”

“Oh, Mr. Marston,” murmured the lady, and her voice was strangely altered as she spoke, “I too had fortune and high birth, and married what the world calls, suitably, and yet my life has been a life of suffering—of daily—hourly—perpetual suffering, of silent, secret agony, far more hard to bear, than any pangs which poverty can inflict. Look at me, Mr. Marston, look at my hollow eyes, and sunken cheeks, look at these thin, transparent hands; I was once as fresh, and full of health, as Emily; and it is not disease which has wasted my life away. But I will not complain; I have never yet complained to any living creature, and I did not come here to speak of myself; I came to speak quietly and dispassionately to you about my cousin, as a mother, who is anxious to assure the happiness of a child, before she leaves the earth, and is no more seen. I would have

spoken to the girl herself, but I wished first to be certain of your love for her. You see I am not so imprudent as you were probably, at first, inclined to suppose."

"Towards me, Lady Trenton, your conduct is all that is generous and noble," said the artist.

"You are probably aware," she returned, without noticing this interruption, "that in consequence of an entail, all that portion of my fortune, which I inherited from my father's uncle, descends to her at my death, should no nearer heir appear to claim it. I know that bets have already been made by her suitors; on the probability of my speedy death. I feel that in a short time their hopes must be fulfilled, and my poor shadow no longer stand between any man and the sun. Nor do I deserve to live, Mr. Marston; I have done little good in the days which have been allotted me."

"Your spirits are depressed, my Lady;

you take a dark view, both of the past and the future," answered Leonard. "This can only be the effect of illness, for you must know, there are few in your station, who are more generally esteemed than yourself."

"Poor consolation, when I know I do not merit it! I did once, indeed, esteem myself as one of the superior beings set apart and raised above my labouring fellow-creatures, to enjoy the pleasures and the honours of the world, in idleness; for I had been taught from infancy, to despise all who belonged to any class inferior to my own. But this has brought me no happiness. I had nothing to do; nothing to wish for, but love; I expected to find it amongst the pampered, selfish sons of prosperity; among the hardened men of the world—I trusted—and I am dying of a broken heart. Emily must be saved from a similar fate! if you love her, as I believe you do, you must aid me to accomplish this,

with all your courage and decision. She must be your wife, before I die."

"But there are others, beside you and I, Lady Trenton, who will claim a right to decide on this important subject," said the young man with great agitation. "Sir Charles Trenton, is, I believe, Miss Carington's guardian."

"Yes, in the eyes of the world," answered the lady, in hurried accents, "but he was only invested with any real authority, by her father's will, till she had attained the age of nineteen. That time expired two months ago; and she is now at full liberty to dispose both of her person and her fortune without control; although as she had still need of protection, on her entrance into society, she has continued to reside with us. She is no relative of Sir Charles's except by marriage; nor is she obliged in any way, to ask his advice. I am her only surviving relative; and as such, I give you my full consent to address her."

"I am deeply grateful for the generous confidence you repose in me," replied Leonard; "but no doubt, you must agree, with me, that as an invited guest, under Sir Charles Trenton's roof, I am bound to speak openly to him, as soon as I am assured of Miss Carrington's regard."

"It is expressly to prevent such a disclosure, that I have come hither," exclaimed the lady with a wild eagerness, which contrasted strangely with the previous tranquillity of her manner. "He must not even suspect your attachment. Oh, Mr. Marston, there are fearful passions on the face of this earth, of which pure and high-minded men like you have no suspicion. Promise me, I implore you, promise me, that you will never reveal to Sir Charles one word of what has now passed between us."

"I promise you to keep silence! most solemnly I promise it, if such be your desire," answered the painter, now gazing with astonishment, and considerable anxiety

on the flushed cheeks and flashing eyes of his companion. "Yet surely, if Miss Carrington listens, with encouragement, to my suit, it will scarcely be possible to conceal our engagement from your husband."

"Acquaint him with your mutual passion and rest, assured she will never be your wife," said Lady Trenton, in a quick, eager voice. "Oh, Mr. Marston," exclaimed the wretched woman, suddenly changing her whole manner to the wildest and most impassioned energy, "do you think I came here to speak to you in this strange and clandestine manner, without having the most urgent and overwhelming reasons for what I do. I saw that you loved the girl; I had watched your struggles between passion and principle; and knew you to be an honourable man, with whom her happiness would be secure, if once married to you. I observed that keen and watchful and jealous eyes were upon you; and that there was none to help you, but myself. But you must obey my directions, if you

desire success. Let not your courage fail you ! Speak to Emily ; obtain the assurance of her love, and then rely on me ! When you are married, the disapprobation of Sir Charles will be of no consequence."

"He has hitherto professed himself my friend," rejoined Leonard fixing his eyes, with a searching glance, on the Lady ; for a doubt of her sanity had taken strong possession of his mind.

"Fool ! fool !" she exclaimed, whilst she moved her hands with a nervous gesture, of uncontrollable agony, "why will you force me to tell you the horrible secret, I would fain conceal even from myself ? Sir Charles Trenton longs for my death, that he may marry the girl himself !"

Marston started ! the full truth of this fearful disclosure burst at once on his mind. He looked at Lady Trenton ; she had covered her face with her hands, and was weeping convulsively. He felt, as distinctly as if the whole harrowing story had been related to him ; the sorrow and despair

which had forced this confession from her lips. He now, for the first time, fully understood her character; and the awful ruin and profound misery which, decked out in smiles and jewels, and the gew gaws of fashion, lies gnawing at the heart of luxury, fulfilling God's eternal law of human equality, making even the balance of suffering between the rich and the poor; and punishing the proud and the idle, for their presumption and self-indulgence, by the scourge of their own passions, and the passions of their associates.

He now fully understood the motive which had driven Lady Trenton to appeal to him for assistance ; yet, for some minutes, he could make her no reply, and the silence was only interrupted by the sobs of the broken-hearted lady.

She was the first to speak.

“Heaven forgive me,” she said, “for the word I have uttered ; but my feelings have been outraged, beyond my powers of endurance. If another woman, in the

pride of health and strength, forgot her duty so far, as to recount the story of her jealousy to a young man like yourself, Mr. Marston, I should once have been the first to condemn her ; and yet, in a moment of passion, the secret, which has for months been robbing me of life, has escaped my lips. But I implore you, give me, at least, the consolation of knowing, that I have not made this disclosure in vain. Let me die with the conviction, that I have been the means of saving this young girl from misery like my own."

"It is possible your imagination may have magnified the danger," said the painter.

"No—no—no," she eagerly replied; "do not think thus for a moment. My husband's conduct is not to be mistaken ! he allows no man to approach Miss Carrington, whom he considers likely to endanger his influence over her. Even Cosway and Lesley he ridicules, when absent, so as effectually to deprive them of her esteem,

whilst his own manner towards her, is artfully adapted not to excite the attention of others, and yet, to subdue her, and wind a sort of magnetic chain around her, from which there is no escape. Ah, Mr. Marston, I was once the dupe of similar arts ; I, too, have been entangled in his snares, and can never be liberated—but by death ! I believed in his love, whilst he only coveted my fortune—but, with Emily Carrington it is different ! he covets both her person and her money ; and the indifference with which he once regarded me, has, under the influence of these evil passions, become the most deadly hatred.”

“ You must surely err in such suspicions, Lady Trenton,” was all the artist could reply.

“ No, Mr. Marston ; a woman’s watchful eye, where she has once loved, can never be deceived. Had you thirsted, for weeks, for a loving glance, as I have done, and then seen it bestowed upon another—had

you waited, for months, eager as a famishing beggar, for a word of kindness, and received only politeness before the world, and bitter taunts in secret—had you heard the soft compliments whispered in another's ear, which once had deluded your own—had you seen even the mockery of love cast off, and felt the chilling frost of contempt and indifference congeal the fiery pulses of your heart, you would never doubt the truth of my conviction. But that could never be! such bitter trials are for woman only—and the world despises the poor martyrs if they complain.”

“But however great have been your trials,” said the painter, “you have borne them meekly and nobly. The world believes you are a happy wife.”

“Yes, thanks to my hypocrisy, which the world calls duty,” she replied, “Had I murmured, I only should have been blamed. Men are most lenient to each other's faults, and the poor slave, who cannot bear the tyranny of her master in

silence, finds scant compassion. But my fears of the opinion of the world are at an end. I have nothing to gain, or to lose, upon earth. It is time, therefore, that I should cease to play a part, and instead of veiling the vices of others, endeavour to do the little good I can. I have trusted you, as I never trusted any man, save my husband, before, for I feel the hand of death is upon me, and my mind has strengthened as my body has become weak. Of this, I am convinced, that if I die before you have made Emily Carrington your wife, all hope of your ever doing so is at an end. Speak to her, therefore, this very day."

"To-day, Lady Trenton?—Nay, that would be too precipitate."

"Put away fear, she must accept your hand after the encouragement she has given you; urge her to a secret marriage—she is romantic, and will not be shocked by such a proposal, and should this be necessary, to avoid delay and opposition, rely on my assistance and protection."

Marston did not reply. He paced up and down the room for several minutes without speaking. Strong passions were struggling in his breast. All the desires he had long earnestly endeavoured to suppress, all the wild hopes he had sought for weeks to banish from his mind seemed suddenly on the point of being accomplished; and yet, in spite of Lady Trenton's promises, he could not believe in the reality of success. Something dark and threatening suddenly mingled in his dreams of love and beauty, which chilled his heart, even when he listened; his conscience revolted from all ideas of secrecy and deceit, and he shrunk back like one who suddenly sees a dark abyss open before him on a verdant path.

New secrets of human nature, and its perversion and corruption, engendered by a false social organization, and the luxurious idleness of what is falsely called civilization, flashed before his mind, making him at once conscious of his own com-

parative purity, and of the ennobling and strengthening influence of intellectual labour.

He felt that he did not belong to the class with which he associated; their habits of thought and modes of feeling were not his, but had been pampered by indulgence, conventional falsehoods, and self-delusion into foul disease, and he shrunk from inextricably involving himself in the dark labyrinth of an artificial existence, even by a union with a creature so fascinating as Emily Carrington.

Lady Trenton watched him with profound anxiety, and though she was incapable of comprehending the true nature of his feelings, she understood that he hesitated to accede to her proposals.

“You are a proud man, Mr. Marston,” she said, at length, “and you do not implicitly trust to my promises? But, indeed, you have no cause to dread a refusal. If I must reveal the secrets of my sex, I will tell you, that Emily Carrington has played with your feelings till her vanity has be-

come love. Your attachment to her is sincere. Hesitate no longer! But hark! I hear their horses coming up the park—I must leave you—but, look here, look, if you still doubt me,” and she pointed from the window. “See how Sir Charles and Emily have ridden forward together, away from all the rest? how he is bending towards her, and pouring his soft, insinuating accents in her ear, whilst his eyes speak passion undisguised. But she is not thinking of him—she smiles vacantly—she glances restlessly up at this window, as she passes beneath! She will, no doubt, find some excuse to visit you before many minutes have elapsed. I must be gone, but remember, I rely on your secrecy and discretion.”

“Be assured of my profound gratitude, for the confidence you have reposed in me, and believe that the seal of secrecy is on my lips,” returned the artist.

“One thing more before we part,” murmured Lady Trenton, as she paused

near the door, "beware of that woman Clayton. Though convicted of theft, and she has dared to insult me in the most flagrant manner, Sir Charles has taken her under his protection, and insists on her remaining in my service. Some secret understanding no doubt exists between them."

So saying, the lady laid her thin finger for a moment on her lips, and then glided from the room.

Marston remained in the highest state of excitement. The glimpse he had caught of Emily Carrington from the window, in all her bright and joyous beauty, had contributed to heighten the effect of Lady Trenton's words. She had, indeed, glanced upwards at his window; and their eyes had met, though only for a moment; the expression of that glance had been such as sufficed to banish all thoughts of prudence and philosophy from his mind.

From that moment, he resolved to follow the advice of Lady Trenton, without tor-

menting himself by vain anxieties for the future; and to obey, without further questioning, the dictates of passion.

At this critical hour of his life, the absence of his uncle deprived him of the only wise friend in whom he could have confided; and wilfully deaf to the warning voice in the depths of his own heart, he rushed forward, with the eager impetuosity of youth, guided alone by his passionate desires.

As Lady Trenton had foretold, scarcely five minutes had passed over, before Mars-ton heard the light step of Emily Carrington approaching his room.

His hand trembled, though he still continued to paint; and his agitation was so great, that he feared to trust his voice, and only returned her greeting on her entrance by a silent inclination of the head. But the passionate ardour of his glance, was far more eloquent than words. The eyes of Emily Carrington sunk beneath it.

She blushed deeply, and evidently em-

barrassed, seemed to hesitate, before she approached his easel, to observe, as usual, the progress of his work. But women are always the first to recover their presence of mind on such occasions; and finding she was not addressed, she broke the silence, by uttering several pretty exclamations of surprise and admiration of the picture which had indeed been greatly embellished, since the preceding day.

But though the girl's manner had as much cheerfulness as usual, it was not natural; there was something forced and constrained in her voice; and Marston, with a lover's quick observation, detected a slight tremor in her hand, which encouraged his most ardent hopes. She did not venture to raise her eyes to his; but she felt that his ardent gaze was fixed upon her; drinking in, as if his soul had been athirst, every trait of her exceeding beauty.

Never, perhaps, had she looked more

lovely. She still wore her riding-dress, which fully displayed the perfect proportions of her exquisitely rounded figure; her hair, gathered into two large tresses under her beaver hat, lay in curved and waving lines, on her soft cheek, whose bloom was heightened by her blushes. An undefinable expression of diffident and conscious love, gave a new charm to her whole person; when she did, at length venture to look up, smiling and blushing, as she pointed with her small, ungloved hand, to something which she protested, was a fault in the picture.

Marston was more confused than herself; and he bent down, as if to examine his work, but, in fact, to conceal his emotion; and then, by a sudden impulse, unable to master his feelings, he seized the hand of Emily in his; but dropping it before she even made an effort to withdraw it, he turned suddenly away, and walked with hurried steps, to the further end of the room.

Approaching footsteps were again audible in the passage.

“Miss Carrington, I implore you to forgive my temerity,” was all he had time to utter, before Mr. Cosway entered the room.

This gentleman had begun to be very seriously uneasy, at the progress of the intimacy between the painter and Emily. He no longer perfectly relied on the prejudices of her class proving sufficient to prevent her falling seriously in love ; and he blamed himself for having first set such prejudices at defiance, by the friendship which he had paraded for Marston. By a strange contradiction, common to many men of society, he was vain of being acquainted with men of talent, though in secret he never regarded them as equals. By talking of his friend, the author of the last novel, or of his having dined with so and so, the writer of a favourite poem, he flattered himself, no doubt, that he too

should be considered a man of talent; he was no doubt clever, and it refreshed his active mind, when wearied by the vapid nonsense of his own class, to enjoy the racy conversation of master minds; but still he never sincerely forgot that his ancestors came over with William the Conqueror, and that there was an earldom in the family. It mortified and annoyed him, therefore, to suppose that there was a bare possibility of Marston's being his successful rival, in the affections of the beautiful heiress.

As soon as he thought seriously of the existence of such a danger, he determined to exert his utmost abilities to prevent it; and his friendly manner towards the painter, had already undergone a great change. He never allowed them to be alone together, if he was able to prevent it. He had felt certain that he should find Emily, that afternoon, in the artist's room; and it was this persuasion which had brought him thither.

He saluted them both with his usual careless frankness ; and his quick eye had no sooner glanced from one to the other, than he was convinced that he had interrupted, by his presence, some conversation of more than ordinary interest, and he internally exulted, at having arrived so opportunely.

But he was too fine a diplomatist, and too accomplished a man of the world, to betray his suspicions, by word or look ; and he began at once to rattle on, in his usual wild, and witty style.

“How could you gallop off from all your admirers in such a saucy manner, Miss Carrington,” he said. “Poor Lesley nearly killed himself, by attempting to leap a five-barred gate after you ; so after he had tried twice to prove his courage, he passed quietly through a gap in the hedge. When his father sold red herrings, I suppose, he had few opportunities of leaping five-barred gates. Marston, how comes it you never ride ?”

"I was also brought up in the city, and my time is too precious at present," was the artist's short reply.

"That is meant no doubt as a reproof to idle fellows like me," said Cosway, laughing. "I know you are a man of industry, and despise those idle mortals, whose only business is amusement; but what can a briefless barrister, like myself, do better, than ride about the country in charming company, and amuse himself innocently, by taking healthy exercise in the long vacation."

"We pursue very different objects in life," returned Marston, "but if you are content, I have no desire to criticise your occupations. Work to me is pleasure."

"That is where we differ!" cried the barrister, "and I appeal to Miss Carrington if it is not more ennobling to the soul to gallop, in the fresh morning breeze, over a wide and flowery heath, without care, or toil, to sitting here with the smell of turpentine, instead of flowers, bending over

a canvass with a brush in your hand, for hours together, in pursuit of that empty bubble, fame ! or that vile dross, which bears the name of money. For my part, you may say as many fine things as you please about labour ; but I rejoice that I was not born to work ; and I candidly confess, I cannot humble myself to the drudgery."

Though Marston felt the sting, meant to be conveyed in these words, he gave no evidence that he understood the sneer.

It was not the first time that persons, calling themselves gentlemen, had thought proper to give him an intimation of his inferiority. But such treatment never wounded him. It only roused his pride ; and well aware that Cosway was annoyed by Miss Carrington's preference for his society, he was not surprised that his professed friendship had become less cordial

A noble mind, he thought, would have been incapable of such a paltry attempt

to humiliate a rival ; but he only smiled, and simply replied, that though others might regard labour as a drudgery, he considered it necessary to the full and healthy development, both of our mental and physical powers, and that to exercise his faculties, was to him a necessity of his nature, whilst idleness would be insupportable.

Cosway felt the rebuke, and sorry for having betrayed his ill-humour, he turned the conversation by a ridiculous description of old Lady Charlotte's horsemanship.

But though he frequently appealed, by his glances, to Miss Carrington, she uttered not a word ; and after walking to the window, and standing for several minutes, silently examining a sketch, of which she distinguished not one line, she abruptly left the room.

When the girl regained her own chamber, she sat, for more than half an hour, reflecting, with all the ecstatic pleasure of a

first love, on the conduct of Marston. She could no longer doubt, that he loved her, or that he would, in all probability, very shortly make her a declaration of his attachment ; and her heart beat wildly with the consciousness of triumph. But still, though delighted to be assured of his love, and fully persuaded that she was herself most seriously attached to him, she was still undecided, how far she should venture to encourage him.

Cosway's sneer at the artist's necessity for labour, had not failed to leave its impression on her mind ; and though her imagination was in that excited state, which girls call 'being in love,' she could not, for a moment, entertain a thought of marrying a man whom people looked down upon. She wondered, very much, how far the public estimation of his talents, as an artist, insured him personal respect ; but that was not a question she could put to any body. To be sure, she thought, whatever might be his profession, all who

were acquainted with Mr. Marston must admit, that he was very gentlemanly, and handsome, and delightful. But still, that did not quite content her. She heaved a deep sigh, and thought of a coronetted carriage, and court balls, and all the brilliant delights attending on a noble marriage.

To marry Marston, would be madness—absolute madness, it appeared to her at that moment; and yet, when she remembered the sound of his voice, the pressure of his hand, and his expressive eyes, she felt it would be impossible to refuse him.

She longed, and yet she dreaded, to be again alone with him.

She was still in this state of indecision, agitated by fickle feelings, and wayward imaginations, very different from the ardent passion which engrossed the painter's heart, when the great bell rang for dinner.

She made a hasty toilet, and descended to the drawing-room with a pleasing flutter

of expectation, such as she had never before experienced ; totally undecided how to act, in case the artist renewed his attentions ; and yet very anxious to be again in his presence.

The party staying in the house was already assembled when she made her appearance ; but Lesley was the only guest from the neighbourhood.

Marston was the last to appear, but though he did not approach Miss Carrington, their eyes met more than once, and Emily's glances were far from discouraging. Like a true coquette, she contrived, during the whole evening, to avoid exchanging a word with him ; and yet they both retired to rest, fully convinced of each other's attachment.

The girl equally unwilling to resign her lover, or to decide her future destiny, by accepting his addresses, resolved to delay his explanation as long as possible. Marston, on the contrary, almost convinced that Lady Trenton had spoken truth, when

she asserted that Emily returned his attachment, resolved that another day should not pass over without his having obtained from her own lips the confession of her love.

CHAPTER VIII.

No parish money, or loaf,
No pauper badges for me,
A son of the soil, by right of toil
Entitled to my fee.
No alms I ask, give me my task :
Here are the arm, the leg,
The strength, the sinews of a man
To work, and not to beg.

Hood's *Lay of the Labourer*.]

ON the morning following Kate's arrival at the farm-house, her father was too feeble and exhausted to leave the bed the farmer's wife had spread him in the loft, and the

girl descended alone, when at an early hour, she supposed, from the hum of voices, that the family was assembled at breakfast.

Mrs. Robson, the mistress of the house, gave her a kindly welcome, made a place for her at table between herself and her husband, and placed a large basin of coffee and milk, and a slice of bread before her.

Kate looked timidly round, and saw two lads and three girls at table, besides the farmer and his wife.

"These five are my children," said Mrs. Robson, pointing proudly to the party. "They are all healthy and strong, Heaven be praised!"

And really, both boys and girls were so plain and heavy-looking, that this was the only compliment, which even a mother could pay them.

"And why don't you tell, who I am, Mother Robson?" said a youth, who sat apart on a stool before the fire, eating bread and cheese, and staring at the

stranger, from whom he had never turned his eyes away, since she had entered the kitchen.

“The less that is said about you, the better,” murmured the farmer, gruffly, “so hold your tongue, till you are spoken to.”

Kate looked with some curiosity at the person thus addressed. He was a working lad about twenty, athletic, and well-grown, and with fine aquiline features decidedly handsome, although sunburnt. His large black eyes, sometimes twinkled with the cunning of a savage, and at others flashed with the fiercest passion. His dress was torn and dirty, his dark hair, long and unkempt, and his hands unwashed; but there was nothing of the heavy stupidity of the farmer’s sons about him; his whole appearance was expressive of uncultivated daring, and restless intellect.

Mrs. Robson took no notice of the lad’s reply, but continued her conversation with Kate, by inquiring if she was ac-

quainted with any one in the village, whither she and her father were so anxious to proceed.

"My mother was born there," said the girl, in reply.

"So was I?" answered the dame. "May I be so bold, to ask her maiden name?"

"Jane Dent."

"What! you don't mean to say, your mother was the daughter of the old parish clerk, Richard Dent?"

"Yes! she was."

"Why did you not tell me that, last night?" cried the woman. "Many a-day, have she and I played together, on the village green; our fathers were next door neighbours. She came down to see her father before he died—he died in the workhouse—for he was never a very prudent man—and after that, we never heard any more about your mother. She is dead too, I suppose!"

"Yes, answered Kate, sadly, "she died three years ago."

"Your father seems to me, as if he was not quite right in his mind, poor man."

"He has been very ill for long," answered the girl, "he has never got over my mother's death, and he had no rest, till he came here once more, where he had first known her."

"Poor thing, it is very sad for you," said Mrs. Robson, kindly, "but I am very glad you happened to come to our door. The old man wants rest, and you must stay here till he is better. Your mother's daughter is welcome to what I can give."

Kate thanked her, and spoke of payment, but the farmer's wife replied, that she could not think of taking money, but would be very thankful, as it was harvest time, if the girl would help her in her household labours. To this, she gladly agreed, and commenced forthwith.

The farmer and his family dispersed to

their various employments, without many words being exchanged between them, but the lad, Ned, still sat by the fire, or lounged about on various pretences, watching every movement of Kate, as if under the influence of a charm.

“If you are going to the mill, Ned,” said Mrs. Robson, turning, at last, sharply towards him, “you had better be off. You stand a chance of getting something, you won’t like, if you don’t come back sooner than you did the last time.”

“A sound thrashing, I suppose you mean,” answered the youth, doggedly. “That would be nothing new ; and I believe my back has got so hard, I should hardly feel it. Suppose it is my pleasure to stay half an hour longer where I am, pray what is to be done then ?”

“If my husband was here, he would soon teach you that,” said the woman, “but you are such a contradictory brute, I know it is no use speaking to you.”

“If people spoke civilly to me, there

might be a difference," answered Ned, and a strange expression passed over his face, which did not escape Kate's observation.

"What do you think?" he continued turning to the girl. "Have people any right to expect me to behave like a christian, when they treat me no better than a dog?"

"Never mind him!" said Mrs. Robson, in a whisper to Kate, "he is only a love child of a relation of mine, and we just let him hang about the house for charity."

"Pretty charity," cried Ned, with a wild laugh, as he caught the last words. "You know I have nobody to take my part, so you make me work like a Turk, and give me nothing, but scant fare and hard blows, and pride yourself on your charity. But I'll soon be my own master."

"And what then? Who would mind you a bit the more if you were?"

"I'll teach you, and some others to mind me, before long, or I'm mistaken! and you mistress Kate, as they call you,

don't you believe all mother Robson has to say against me. I've more sense in my little finger, than⁷ one of her great lubberly sons has in his whole body ; and whoever my father may have been, he has given me good blood in my veins, and good brains in my head."

"Why you don't know your letters, you blockhead," cried the farmer's wife, whose anger was roused, by such disparaging mention of her sons.

"And whose fault is that, but of those who never sent me to school," answered Ned, with undiminished audacity. "I know a pretty girl, however, when I see one. I can tell Mrs. Kate that, and a prettier girl than she, I have not seen for many a long day." So saying, he stuck his hat on the side of his head, and strutted from the kitchen, with the most self-possessed and careless effrontery.

"That lad is incorrigible!" said Mrs. Robson, in a voice of despair, as he disappeared; but afterwards she spoke no

more of him. As he returned from the mill, at a much earlier hour than usual, and gave no further cause of offence, he was allowed to sit undisturbed in a corner, during the evening. His bold eyes were fixed the whole time on Kate, and she was glad when the time arrived, that she could escape to her humble bed.

Though on the morrow, old D'Arcy came down, and sat in the kitchen great part of the day, he took little notice of what was passing, and very rarely spoke. He retired early to rest, and Ned, unasked, sprang up, and supported his tottering steps.

The following days passed nearly in the same manner. The poor weaver remained in a kind of dreamy stupor, and seemed to have forgotten the object for which he had travelled thither. Kate worked hard, and the youth Ned, who had contrived to find occupation near the house, came in on some pretence or other, a dozen times at least, in the course of each day.

On all these occasions, he had a word to speak to Kate, or her father, or some little attention to offer them. Old D'Arcy did not even observe him, but Kate accepted his kindness with her usual sweetness of manner, rendered perhaps yet gentler by her compassion for an unfortunate being whom every one else treated as an outcast. She smiled when she addressed him, and the remembrance of her smile was a treasure to him, he would not have exchanged for double the money he had ever possessed in his life. She thanked him gratefully for his kindly offices, and the sound of her voice rang like music in his ears, all day long, and haunted his dreams all night. Poor Ned was for the first time desperately in love, and he loved with all the ardour of a most passionate and undisciplined nature.

Kate felt this, with sorrow and alarm, and eagerly waited for a favourable change in her father, that they might pursue their journey. At length, one morning, when

she as usual approached her father's bed, her terror was great to find it empty.

She was already dressed ; and in a state of the wildest alarm, she descended from the loft in quest of him. The agony of such a moment is not to be described. She could not have given utterance to the horrible thoughts, and fears, and self-reproaches, which distracted her mind ; and in after days, she shrunk from the recollection of feelings, which no language could describe.

Ned was alone in the kitchen, but he could give her no tidings of her father. She ran forward into the open air, and when she had crossed the farm-yard, she clambered up into a pile of timber, so as to be able to see a considerable distance around.

An exclamation of joyful surprise burst from her lips, when she beheld her father sitting, at no great distance, on a stone, under a hollow bank, on the margin of a little rivulet.

His hands were crossed upon his stick ; his chin rested on his hands ; and his eyes were intently gazing on the waves which rippled past him, glittering in the rising sun.

There as he sat, silent, and still, visions were flitting before him, more beautiful than the hopes of men, and he heard angels revealing the secrets of a world, where the sufferings of the poor shall cease.

The joy of his daughter, when she beheld him, was greater than even her agony had been. Yes, sorrow has sometimes, on earth, its compensation; and affection can confer joy on the child of poverty, unknown to those whose feelings are blunted by prosperity and self-indulgence !

Kate approached her father slowly and softly, and she paused as she drew near, for she heard that he was murmuring words of prayer.

This sudden transition, from the terrible apprehensions she had so recently felt, overcame her strength of mind, and cover-

ing her face with her hands, she wept violently. But fearful of exciting her father's observation, she did not long give way to this weakness, and quickly wiping away her tears, she went and seated herself quietly, at the old man's side.

D'Arcy observed her instantly, and a smile of ineffable love and peace came over his face, as he took her hand in his, and bent down and kissed her.

"My own Kate," he said, "I would not wake you, for we have further to go, and I thought you had need of sleep."

"And has your sleep refreshed you, dearest father?" inquired the girl, examining the careworn features of her parent with all the eagerness of anxious love.

"Heaven has refreshed me, my child," answered the old man. "It is only there, that rest can be found. I have seen your mother, Kate. I am happier now, for I know, that my love for thee, will not divide me from her soul. She has told me many

things, and I have much to do before I go to her ; but you are weary, and we will rest here for an hour or two longer."

"Yes, let us rest here," answered his daughter. "How often, when we were in the close city, have we longed for the fresh morning air, sweet with the meadow flowers, as it is here ; and the voice of the birds, twittering amongst the bushes, is far sweeter, than the songs of the poor caged prisoners, at our neighbours' windows in that narrow court. Look how the swallows are flying round us, and dipping their wings in the water."

"They are happier than we are, Kate—they know no laws, but those of God. Each takes his portion, which his God allots him, and not one dies of hunger. It is the laws of man which make his fellow creatures wretched—and man, in his insatiable appetite for power, and self-enjoyment, grinds down his brother man to dust. Yes, Kate, in our proud age of luxuries, above a hundred yearly die, in

this fair country of starvation! Let great men think of that, when they feast in honour of trade and labour! let the rich and idle think of that, when they pride themselves on their national industry! let them remember the poor artificer, whose half-paid toil has created their wealth; let them remember the weary hours of half famished labour, the broken hearts, the sickness, the suffering, tears, and death, which have gone to build up that vain and empty thing, which they call, national glory."

"And yet people write and talk a great deal now, about bettering our condition; there must be hope in store for the labourer!" said the girl.

"Yes! Kate, there are men, who seek popularity, by talking of the people's wrongs; and there are men who propose superficial remedies for the deep canker of our social corruption. Others cast us a mite, from the profits of our own toil, and think it charity, and pride themselves on

fulfilling their duties to the poor, and wonder at poor men's ingratitude. They leave masses to grow up in ignorance and vice, to become paupers, and then the clergy pretend, that all evils are to be cured by inculcating their doctrines, whatever they may happen to be. Oh, Kate, this world is full of humbug, and money gives birth to it all.'

"But I am sure, old Mr. Marston was the poor man's true friend," said the girl, anxious to change the current of her father's thoughts. "The good curate was always ready to help those in need, and never shrunk from labour."

"He was, indeed, a true Christian," answered the weaver. "It was wrong of me to quarrel with him—but he thought me mad, and that provoked me. I was much to blame. He did really feel for the poor, for he was nearly one of us. Rich men looked down on him almost as much as they do on such as me! Don't think I ever longed for riches, Kate. They would

corrupt me as much as other men ; but my spirit revolts against the slavery of the poor. Remember, my child, let me die, rather than go to a workhouse ! and when I am gone—poor Kate—I cannot bear to think what may be your fate.”

“ I must work, father ! and God will protect me, if I try to do right.”

“ Your beauty will be a double danger,” continued the old man, gazing fondly at his daughter, “ for men pay largely for their concubines, now, when luxury has taught them to marry, not for love, but money. Oh, Kate, if I thought that money could ever tempt you to sin, as it does many such as you, I would send you, with my own hand, guiltless and pure, into eternity.”

“ Have no such fears, father,” said the girl, tenderly pressing his hand, though she looked up with anxious terror at the old man’s excited countenance. “ Be calm and peaceful now. I have money enough for all our present wants.”

“Have you?” he eagerly enquired. “But we are far from home, my child; and who knows what may happen. I am a sad burthen, and a trouble to you, Kate! but you will never desert me! promise never to be divided from me, happen what may.”

“No, dearest father—no power on earth shall part us,” answered the girl; and tears streamed down her cheeks as she spoke.

“And should I leave you, perhaps before long,” he continued, “you will come to rejoin me in eternity.”

“Yes,” she murmured; “but you must not leave me. Stay with me, dear father, for I have none on earth to love me but you!”

The old man bent down and kissed his child; and affection seemed, for awhile, to restore the light of reason to his mind.

“Yes, Kate,” he answered, “I would fain stay with you a little longer—life is so

beautiful with you, my own precious angel. I know I am excited, and very strange at times ; but even if I speak harshly to you, never doubt my love. Oh, no, sweet, patient child—you are dearer to me than my own soul.”

“Indeed —indeed —you are never unkind,” she replied, “and thank Heaven, you are better now, and all will go well again.”

“But I must have those papers, Kate,” rejoined the weaver, in a more agitated voice. “They must not fall into that man’s hands. I remember, now, what brought me from home ! it was no delusion ! I would gladly go on to-day, if you are able !”

“But we must go back first, to the farm-house, and get some breakfast.” said the girl.

“They are all waiting for you in the kitchen,” cried a sharp voice on the bank above them, which Kate knew to be Ned’s.

“Is that the farmer’s son?” enquired old D’Arcy.

“No,” cried the youth, laughing, “I am nobody’s son. He is a wise man who knows his own father, I have heard say, and I have not got that length yet. Master says he is my uncle, and, on the strength of that, he has beat me black and blue, at least, once a week, ever since I could stand, and that is all the education I have.”

“Kate, what does he want?” enquired D’Arcy, in an anxious tone.

“Mistress Robson sent me to say you must come to breakfast,” said Ned Foster, “and I must not stay long, or she will get in one of her passions. But she has a right to be cross, I fancy; for she and her family are all to turn out of the farm in less than a fortnight.”

“Why is that?” asked Kate, as they went along.

“Because they cannot pay their rent,” said the youth, sharply. “Landlords take

all, and many give nothing ; and now the corn is down, the rent is too much for Master Robson to pay, even though he lowers his labourers' wages two shillings a-week. We, poor devils ! cannot work hard, and live upon nothing, though I fancy, that is what landlords, like Sir Charles Trenton, expect, now-a-days. Corn has fallen, and they say the farmer is the sufferer, and the farmer says the labourer is to be the sufferer, and one grinds down the other, till the labourer is like the horse that had only an oat a-day."

" And the horse died," rejoined the weaver, who had listened eagerly to Ned's words.

" Yes ! it did," returned Ned ; " but we labourers are not such fools, though the squires, and the parsons, have done all they could, for many a long year, to make us so. If those, who cannot pay for schooling are not even taught their letters, we, nevertheless, learn a few things here and there, on the outside of the school-room

doors, and we know for one thing, we cannot starve; and another, that if we work hard, we have as good a right as any gentleman to have wives and children, and to be able to maintain them decently with the profits of our toil; and if they won't give us what is right and reasonable—well, we'll take it, that's all."

"There are many in London now think much the same," returned the old man, "though they scarcely dare to say it. But they will speak out, when they get a parliament of the people's choosing."

"I care for nobody, for I have nothing to lose," answered the youth, snapping his fingers. "I don't care that for all the fine gentlemen in the country, though they have had me twice in gaol already. They had better lower their rents quickly, for though they may cry out against the government, as much as they please, for making corn cheap, we are beginning to find out, that they are keeping land

dear, and forcing farmers to pay high rents, and low wages."

"One might fancy you were a farmer yourself, you take their part so," said Kate, simply.

"Oh, not I," cried Ned. "I don't care a fig for the farmers. Not one of them cares for me! only I should like to see a row between them and landlords, and then I might get something better than hard blows, and spare diet, in the scramble. The election is coming on soon, and then there will be some fun going; but here comes mistress, so good morning to you."

And as the farmer's wife approached, Ned turned away into the stable-yard.

Mrs. Robson, the farmer's wife, was a spare, hard-working woman, who, though she had five children, had always assisted her husband in all his labours. Labour had somewhat bent her tall, bony figure, and her hands had become like tanned leather. She was the sister of Clayton,

Lady Trenton's maid, and the contrast in their appearance was as great as in their fortunes. She was a simple, kind-hearted woman, though the trouble of bringing up a large family, with small means, had somewhat soured her temper.

"Good morning to you," she said, as she advanced, wiping her hands upon her apron. "I was afraid you were gone, and I have got a good cup of coffee ready for you."

"You are very kind," answered Kate, "and really I don't know how to thank you. But I should not think of going without paying for our accommodation."

"Nonsense, child," said the woman. "I am not such a brute as to make a charge to a child of your mother—and she in such trouble too. If you can spare a trifle, I shall be quite satisfied with whatever you can afford to give."

"Thank you kindly," answered the girl, in a low voice.

"No thanks at all!" was the reply.

“ We may have to be thankful for a night’s lodging ourselves before long ; it would ill beseeem me to make a profit of an old neighbour’s child.”

“ Your nephew said you are likely to leave the farm, before long ! is it then true ? ” inquired Kate.

“ Did he say so ! you must not mind him much, for he is a sad scapegrace ; but that is true, for once ; we have worked the land here, late and early, for twenty one years, and all my children have been born in that house ; and we have slaved to make the most of every thing, so as just to feed the children, and pay the rent ; and now, when corn has fallen, we cannot pay, and so we must go. But don’t speak of this before my good man, he cannot bear it.”

They now entered the kitchen, and found, as Mrs. Robson had promised, a comfortable breakfast prepared for them, of which the farmer and the children had already partaken.

Robson was a large man, between fifty

and sixty, dressed in coarse and much worn, but well-patched garments. His figure had once been powerful and athletic, but was beginning to give way, under the effects of hard labour, and exposure to all kinds of weather. He had always been known as a good-tempered, sober, hard-working man, who had just sense enough to conduct his own concerns, and to manage his farm, as his father had done before him; prudence, and the force of habit, supplied to him the want of wisdom. He had lived happily with his wife, and had been content and cheerful, though their means were small; but now the hopes of his life were all blasted, and since Sir Charles Trenton's steward, had given him notice to quit, Joe Robson had sunk into a sullen despondency, only interrupted by bursts of passion, when he had yielded to the temptation of seeking to forget his troubles, at the ale house. This weakness had latterly grown rapidly into a habit.

He was sitting with his arms crossed

upon the table, and his head bowed upon his breast, when his wife entered with her guests. For some time, he took no notice of them. At length, he raised his dull, heavy eyes, and fixed them on old D'Arcy who sat opposite to him.

"You are one of those weaver people, they tell me, friend," he said, "who are making beggars of us farmers, for their special profit ; but it seems to me, as if you were worse off than myself."

"We have been half starved, for many a long year," answered the old man, "when the farmers and landlords got good profits at our expense ; but now, though we have got cheap bread, at last, I don't see why that should do you any harm ; the workman must have his hire ! it is only the value of land which is lowered, and rents must come down ; the interest of every other capital has fallen already."

"I don't understand much about these things," returned Robson, "but I know

that when I am not paid, I cannot pay, and so there is an end of it ; and it is a cruel shame, for an honest, hard working man, to be turned adrift like an old horse, when he has paid his rent to a farthing, punctual to a minute, above twenty years, and given his vote at every election, just as his landlord bid him."

"That is just the evil !" cried D'Arcy, whose mind, though over excited, was quite clear, as soon as he got on the favorite subject of his thoughts. "How can the farmers expect that parliament will attend to the interests of the poor, when they are only chosen by the rich."

"Sir Charles Trenton always told us, he had our interests at heart," said the farmer, "and I, and many like me, who had not much school learning, thought he understood all about parliament, and such matters, better than we did, and we thought it was all right, as long as they kept the price of corn up. When it went down,

they told us it was all the fault of you weavers, who wanted to get rich at the farmer's expense."

"The manufacturers and the landlords are much the same for that matter," answered the weaver "they have the capital in their own hands, and they don't care what becomes of farmers, or workmen, or weavers, provided they get a good interest for it. It is for this they have tried all they can to make us jealous of each other, and to keep us all in their power, by persuading us that we have each a different interest. But the poor are all brethren, my friend, whether weavers, or workmen, or farmers ; they are all labourers, and have all the same common interest. It is all humbug to say that what is for the advantage of the rich, is also for the advantage of the poor. It is no such thing. It is for your landlord's profit to maintain high rents, but not for yours ; high taxes are for the profit of the landlords, whose relations and friends get places and em-

ployments under government, and who all contrive to profit by the government in some way or another ; but they do you no good ; high tythes are for your landlords' benefit, who have sons and cousins by the dozen, in the church ; but what use they are to us I could never find out ; and it is time the farmers learnt that nobody will look after their interests, as long as they choose members of parliament at the bidding of their landlords."

"Well," returned Robson, with a very perplexed look, "I have heard some fellows say almost the very same thing, at the ale house ; but you see it is a very difficult thing for a man like me to take new thoughts into his head, when he is past fifty. I had just been accustomed to go on, as my father did before me, and to leave all these things to the gentlemen who told us they understood them much better than we did ; but when starvation stares a man in the face, he cannot help thinking there must be something wrong."

“And when it stares millions in the face,” returned D’Arcy, “there must be a great deal radically wrong. And how can it be otherwise, when all the laws are made by only a fraction of the country, whose first care is to defend what they have got, and their second, to get as much more as they can. The whole welfare of the nation, they consider, depends on the defence of property. Labour is the poor man’s property ; but they never labour, and so they count labour for nothing.”

“The days are coming when I shan’t be able to labour any more,” said the farmer. “My rent has been too high for me to save, and now, in these hard times, I must sell my stock to pay my debts. I shall never hold my head up again. “But eat your breakfast, friend ; you look as if you had gone through hard days, too ! and that is why I have made so bold to talk to you so freely.”

“Yes, hard days enough,” answered poor D’Arcy, who, conscious of his own excited

state of mind, did all in his power to appear composed. "My daughter can tell you more than I can. I have worked hard too, in my day ; but it is nearly over with me now, as well as you. Kate, we must be going, my child," he added, and with a confused and restless look, he arose from his chair.

Kate drew out her little purse, and slipped a few shillings into Mrs. Robson's hand, though the poor woman would gladly have refused, had her present difficulties not made every farthing of consequence to her. Old D'Arcy seemed to understand, and thanked the good people cordially for their hospitality and kindness.

They parted with mutual good wishes, and Mrs. Robson stood on the threshold, and watched the weaver and his daughter for some minutes, as they went down the lane.

"I pity that young girl," she said, turning to her husband ; "I pity her with all my heart. Trouble has made the old man

mad, or near it; and God knows what may befall her, before she finds a resting-place. It is a sad trial for a young creature like that, to be wandering over the country in such a way."

"Who knows whose turn may come next," answered the farmer, sadly. "When I look at you and the little ones, and the corn I have sown, which I shall never reap, I feel as if I was well nigh mad myself, and it is all that Ned's doing. I would not say so before the strangers, but Sir Charles Trenton would never have been hard with me, except for that vagabond of a boy."

"La! Joe, you never can think that such a great gentleman would stoop to take revenge, for that lad's wild folly, upon poor, innocent people like us?" said his wife.

"Yes, I do, Peggy. The gentlemen all know the farmers are beginning to be discontented, and are not so ready as they were, to believe the lies they have been

telling them, this forty years and more ; and at the last meeting about the Corn Laws, the lad carried a loaf and a death's head on a pole, and he was impudent when they sent him to the House of Correction. Those are great crimes in the eyes of gentlemen, who have been used to nothing but submission. Besides, somebody told the steward that I was so angry at their behaving so to my nephew, that I meant to vote against the Baronet, at the first election for the county. The very next day I had notice to quit. You know that as well as I."

"Well, I suppose you had been saying something foolish when you were in liquor," said Mrs. Robson, sadly ; "but it cannot be helped now."

"I don't know," returned the farmer, "but it is very hard, if we are such slaves, that we dare not speak our minds about what most concerns us, nor use our rights as we think best. But it is so, Peggy ; we farmers are the landlords' slaves, who must

do their bidding, or be sent adrift to starve. I wonder if the ballot would help us. It is better to go to America at once, where a man can have land he can call his own."

"Martha Clayton ought to help us, when we have done so much for her son," rejoined Mrs. Robson. "They say she can do what she pleases with Sir Charles Trenton. But don't forget, Joe, the west field of wheat must be brought in to-day."

"No, mother! I'm going; so, good morning; we must work, and trust in God to the last."

So saying, the farmer went out to his fields with a sad but submissive heart, and his wife returned to her household work, full of anxious thoughts.

CHAPTER IX.

Born to himself, by no possession led,
In freedom fostered, and by fortune fed,
Nor guides, nor rules, his sovereign choice control,
His body independent as his soul ;
Loos'd to the world's wide range, enjoined no aim,
Prescribed no duty, and assigned no name,
Nature's unbounded son, he stands alone.

SAVAGE.

KATE D'ARCY and her father pursued their way towards the village of Brookdale, unconscious that either Leonard Marston, or his uncle, had any connection with that neighbourhood.

The girl scarcely remembered any feature of the country, she had left it so young, but D'Arcy, the strength of whose memory seemed to increase in proportion to the excitement of his other faculties, recognized every turning of the road, and every bush and cottage on the way. The nearer he approached the village, the more tranquil his mind became. It seemed as if he was conscious that he was soon to arrive at some long wished-for haven of rest, where all his anxieties and sufferings were to find repose.

Broken words of exultation sometimes escaped from his lips, and it was plain to Kate that his mind was occupied with subjects, which whether delusion, or reality, were equally a mystery to her.

They had proceeded some distance, and were crossing a meadow towards a narrow footbridge over the rivulet, which, fringed with willows, skirted the high road, when Ned Foster suddenly came out of a copse of low brush-wood, with a faggot on his

back; and pretending to rest it on a gate, they were approaching, he directly obstructed their path.

He stared so audaciously at Kate, never once turning his large, black, wild eyes from her face, that she would gladly have avoided passing him. But the gate, where he stood, afforded the only egress from the field on the side next the village. Old D'Arcy did not seem to observe the youth, and they proceeded, therefore, close up to him, without speaking.

"Will you be so good as to let us pass?" said the girl, timidly, when she found that he still stood, so as to prevent her opening the gate.

"I should just like to know first, where you are going; for you are the prettiest girl I have seen any where in these parts," he replied, with the easy assurance of a village rake.

"That can be no business of yours," she said, with tolerable composure, al-

though the blood mounted to her cheeks as she spoke.

"I don't mean you any harm," returned the youth, in a somewhat humbler tone, "but you are devilish pretty, and I should like to know if I could help you in any way; for your old father, I fancy, cannot do you much good."

"I am much obliged to you," answered Kate civilly and coldly, "but I want no help. If I did, I know where to seek it."

"Oh, you need not be so proud; for I fancy there is no great difference between us," answered Ned, saucily. "Let me carry your bundle. If your father knew what he was about, he ought to have taken it, instead of letting you toil on, with such a weight under your arm, this warm morning."

"Thank you; my father will carry it, when I am weary."

"Where are you going to lodge in the village?"

“That is more than I can say.”

“More than you choose to tell, I suppose. But more fool you; if you want to get out of my way. There is many a worse looking fellow than I am, when I get on my Sunday clothes; and though I am no great scholar; I am no idiot, I can promise you.”

“You seem to have a pretty good opinion of yourself, at all events,” answered Kate, with an involuntary smile.

“And if I did sing my own praise, it was only because nobody else would,” said the youth, laughing, so as to display a beautiful set of white teeth. “The little I do know, I have picked up for myself; for nobody ever troubled their heads about my education; and, to confess the truth, you are the first person I ever concerned myself about; for I have had more cuffs than good words, ever since I remember anything. Even the village children called me a little vagabond; my father disowned me; and though my mother had never

been into a Church, she was anxious to pass for an honest woman, and sent her love babes secretly out to nurse. But here I am; strong and healthy for all that! and I am the less beholden to them.

I care for nobody, no, not I,
For nobody cares for me.

But, somehow, your pretty face pleases me; I don't often wish to do anybody a good turn; but I would gladly carry your bundle, if you would allow me."

"What is that lad talking about?" enquired old D'Arcy, stopping suddenly, and looking round at his daughter, who was a few paces behind him.

"Nothing but nonsense, father," returned Kate. "I wish you would tell him to let us pass through that gate; for he won't attend to me."

"He has no right to stop up the public path," said the weaver. "Move out of the way, sir, if you please."

"Well, if you will just let me walk along

a little way beside you, I will let you pass directly; and I think you cannot well refuse me that, when my aunt has been so friendly to you."

"He is right there, Kate" said her father, who had no suspicion, why she seemed backward in accepting the young man's company

"I'll leave my faggot here, then," cried Ned, flinging the bundle of sticks down behind the hedge; and then holding the gate open for the weaver and his daughter to pass. When he had shut it again, he ran after them; and walked on in silence, for several minutes, by Kate's side.

"I dare say you think I am very bad," he said, at length, "and it is no wonder, for I never had anybody to teach me manners, nor anything else. Uncle took me home to the farm, when I was five years old; but he grudged to pay for my schooling; so I ran about with the village dogs, till I was old enough to earn a penny, by watching

the sheep, or helping the masons. I get best paid now, when I carry the hod; and so I'd rather run the risk of breaking my neck down a ladder, than hoeing potatoes on the farm; for my cousins are always asking me where my mother was married—and, be hanged to them! I'm a fool to mind them; for I would rather be the greatest vagabond than the greatest blockhead in the parish which they are."

"Come young man," cried D'Arcy, suddenly stopping, and turning sharply towards Ned, "we don't want to hear all this foolish stuff. Walk off, if you please, for we have business of our own to attend to, and cannot listen to your nonsense."

"If I knew where I could find you again," said Ned, staring full in Kate's face, "I would be off directly. But I won't go, till you tell me that."

"Pray don't irritate my father," said the girl, in a low voice. "He is ill, and if you contradict him, you will make him far worse. Leave us, I beg of you."

“ But where are you going ? surely you can tell me that.”

“ Indeed, I cannot—we do not know ourselves where we are going.”

“ Poor girl !” returned Ned, with a feeling of tenderness, which seemed alien to his nature. “ Why, you are worse off than I am, for a man can revenge himself, for neglect in fifty ways, but what can a desolate girl do in this bitter world !”

“ Seek strength from God to do her duty, as you should do,” answered Kate, gravely.

“ I have never been taught, even to read the word of God, and I have no duties towards any one,” answered the youth, with a bitter laugh, “ so you may talk religion to somebody else.”

“ But surely you have learnt the difference between right and wrong ?” inquired Kate, looking at her wild companion with an involuntary feeling of compassion.

“ Not I !” was his reply ; “ why, who

do you think would take the trouble ? My mother would have thrown me into a pond, as soon as I was born, if she had not feared the hangman ; my father was a fine gentleman, who cared for nothing but his own amusement, and had to keep up a character for morality ! so the whole parish knocked me about, for I belonged to nobody. Then I was sent to prison for getting into a row, and I learnt more there than I ever knew before ; for I got into good society, and some of the fellows were civil enough to me, for, as they said, we belonged to the same set."

" And was there no trouble taken to teach you to do better for the future ?" inquired the girl.

" The chaplain came sometimes, and talked about conversion and such stuff, as if he, and such as he, were all angels upon earth ! But we knew better than that ; and I told him once that such pious people must take the consequences, if they left such poor devils as I was to grow up

like heathens and half savage beggars in the middle of riches; and I would be whipped if I believed that the church-goers were much better than I was, only they had learnt to do wrong sily."

At this moment the rumbling of a cart was heard turning the corner of a lane behind them, and Ned looked sharply round.

"That's my uncle going to the corn-field," he cried. "I must be off, or I shall get a thrashing; so good day to you, and be sure I'll find you out before long."

So saying he ran into a plantation at the side of the road, and disappeared in an instant.

"I am glad that fellow is gone, Kate," said the weaver, as soon as they were alone, "I don't want anybody with us. There is the church between the trees, and we shall soon be there now. Who was he, Kate?"

"Farmer Robson's nephew, father."

"Aye! so he said; but I don't believe

it," returned D'Arcy. "He was a spy, depend upon it, and we must take care he is not watching us after all. Sir Charles would pay him well, if he could tell him what I am going to do."

"And what are you going to do?" inquired the girl, eagerly.

"You shall know all presently," replied her father. "In ten minutes, I shall have them all in my power. But it is not for money! God forbid that I should seek to do justice for money. It is only to give peace to my own conscience. Somebody has been cheated—and I think I know who, but I am not quite clear on that subject. When I once get the papers, I shall know better. Do you remember your grandfather, Kate?"

"Yes, father—I remember when you and mother came down home in the great scarcity. We lived in his cottage, in a village near a church."

"That is the village," answered D'Arcy, pointing to the houses now visible amidst

the trees, at a few hundred paces distance. "There is the church where your grandfather was parish clerk. But he was not a good man, Kate. He spent all he got, and died in the workhouse. It was a shame for some people to allow it; but the rich have no gratitude to the poor."

"I remember well, mother came down to see him when he was dying," said Kate.

"Yes, my child. It only brought her into trouble," returned the weaver. "Yes, he died in a workhouse, and I shall die before long! we shall all die! never forget that, Kate! but he had forgotten it, and had sold himself to the devil. Your mother told me, he had a fearful death-bed. He was afraid of eternity, and he told her a terrible secret; but he made her promise not to reveal it till after his wife's death. And your mother faithfully kept her word. Her mother only died six months before her; but then, when I knew

all, we fell into trouble, and we put off doing justice from day to day —and then your mother died. I don't quite remember all that has happened since ; but her last wish was, that I should come down here !”

“ Did she tell you why she desired it ?”

“ Yes ! to try what I could do to repair her father's crime ! But this is a secret, Kate—a profound secret, and you must promise to be silent.”

Kate made no answer. Though well aware of her father's dangerous state of mind, she knew, by experience, that all his ideas, though exaggerated, had some foundation in truth ; he was excited, not insane ; and she justly felt, that circumstances might arise, which would render any promise of secrecy, on her part, most imprudent.

The old man was too much occupied by his own thoughts, to notice her silence, and hastening his steps, he eagerly pressed towards the church.

As they approached this building, up a narrow lane, overhung with trees, they could distinctly see that a funeral was going on in the adjoining burying ground. The clergyman was standing at the head of a grave, and reading the service for the dead, whilst a little knot of village idlers had gathered around the mourners.

Intently engaged by the sad ceremony, no person there observed the two poor wanderers who were approaching them ; but old D'Arcy, with a quick and eager glance, at once saw, and understood the whole scene.

"This way, Kate," he said, in a whisper, and he turned quickly into a side path, which led under the church-yard wall to the other side of the holy edifice. "Those people must not see us. Follow me, and don't speak a word," he said.

The girl did as she was commanded, and when the weaver arrived at a little gate, where he was entirely hidden by the old tower, from those assembled round the

grave, he made a sign to his daughter, and walked direct up to a small door at the back of the church, by which the clergyman usually passed from his own house to the vestry.

He lifted the latch. It was open.

“Come in,” he whispered; and when Kate had followed him into the building, he closed the door cautiously, so as not to make the slightest noise.

The church was an old Gothic building, with low, stone, pointed arches, gloomy and mournful, as be seemed the abode of the dead, whose half defaced tombs composed the pavement, and occupied with their solemn, reclining images of stone, several niches in the white-washed walls. The air was damp and chill, and Kate shuddered with a feeling of undefined dread, when she found herself thus shut into the gloomy building; and she looked at her father with more terror than she had ever before felt.

But the old man seemed unconscious of

all which impressed her with awe ; a gleam of frenzied joy flashed from his eyes, such as she had never seen till then, and which increased her apprehensions. It seemed as if the object of all his hopes and all his wishes, was suddenly placed within his grasp, and that he exulted in the conviction that his toilsome journey had not been made in vain.

“Come on quick,” he whispered, taking his daughter by the hand, “we are alone in the church, and there is not a moment to be lost. Follow me !”

With rapid steps he then strode away up the nearest aisle ; when he reached the end of this avenue, he crossed over before the altar into a low arched recess, near the entrance to an ancient chapel, which had been converted into a vestry. Here, under a gothic canopy of carved stone, lay a monumental figure of an ancient baron, extended like a corpse, the legs crossed in memory of a crusade to Holy Land, and the bearded head resting on a stony pillow ;

the whole surmounting a huge square tomb, on which the long legend of the deeds of the departed was no longer legible.

It was to this vain record of the forgotten dead, that old D'Arcy's steps were directed.

"Yes, yes, here is the place—not a stone has been removed!" he murmured, as he rapidly approached it. "Return thanks to Heaven, Kate, for your father's task is well nigh accomplished!"

So great was his agitation that he shook from head to foot, as if he had lost all command over his nerves, and he was obliged to grasp Kate's arm for support.

"Oh father, dear father, be calm," she replied, in a soothing and gentle tone; but he heeded her not; and first stood still, when he had reached the furthest end of the tomb. He then mounted the steps by which it was surrounded, and bending eagerly forward, endeavoured to remove a stone from the inner side of the monument.

But his trembling hands were unequal to the task.

“ Help me, Kate,—help me,” he cried, with the eagerness of madness.

Greatly astonished, the girl instantly obeyed him ; but her surprise was indeed great to find that the stone was actually loose, and yielded easily to her efforts, to draw it out. When she had displaced it, a dark cavity was visible behind it. D’Arcy gazed wildly into the hole, and then, as if not satisfied by merely seeing, he thrust his trembling hand into it, and felt, with fearful eagerness, in every cranny and corner of the rugged stonework.

When he withdrew his arm, and again looked up, Kate was appalled by the expression of unutterable despair, on his countenance.

“ They are gone—all gone !” he murmured, in trembling accents. “ It is too late ! another has been here before me ! My child, my poor child, God protect thee !”

The old man tottered on a few steps, he

held by the rails of the altar for a moment; and then, in spite of poor Kate's efforts to support him, he sunk down on the ground insensible !

"Oh father—do not forsake me," was the girl's broken exclamation. But it was vain ; poor D'Arcy heard her not.

In fearful agony of mind, she knelt down beside her father ; and raising his head in her arms, bent weeping over him in utter despair. But she quickly remembered that other help than hers was necessary, and she thought of the people who were assembled in the churchyard, to bury the dead.

It was impossible that they could hear her voice, where she was, even should she call aloud for assistance ; and she felt that it was absolutely necessary she should quit the insensible old man, and run in search of help. Yet it was terrible to leave her father alone, in his present state, and she hesitated, though she felt she ought to do so.

To her great relief, she suddenly heard one of the church doors opened, and steps approaching her up the aisle. It was the clergyman returning to the vestry.

He was evidently greatly surprised to see two persons already there, and hastily inquired, as he drew near, what they were doing in the church.

Kate started ! she knew the voice ; and as soon as she looked round, she uttered a cry of joyful surprise.

“Can it be possible,” she exclaimed, as she sprang up, and gazed wildly at the clergyman, as if she feared to believe what she saw.

“Kate D’Arcy, and her father, in such a place, and in such affliction !” was the curate’s hurried reply to these words, for it was Mr. Marston ; and he, on his side, was not less astonished, than the girl had been, by his unexpected appearance, by the sad spectacle before him.

“Yes, Mr. Marston,” returned Kate, in hurried accents, “it is James D’Arcy.

Why we are here, it is no time now to explain, for I fear my poor father is dying. His nerves have received a violent shock, and he requires prompt aid, or, I fear, he may be lost to me for ever."

One or two persons who had been lounging about, now approached, and in obedience to Mr. Marston's directions, they raised the insensible body of the weaver, and carried him quickly into the air. One man ran to fetch water, another said some brandy must be brought from the curate's house ; but that worthy man ordered D'Arcy to be carried thither, at once, and placed on a little bed, in one of the lower rooms. Well knowing that much time must elapse before a surgeon could be brought, and convinced that, to save the old man's life, the promptest measures were necessary, he then drew a lancet from his pocket, and bled him copiously in the arm.

Kate, seated near her father's bed, but scarcely conscious where she was, or what

was passing around her, watched the effect of this operation with intense anxiety. Most happily, the relief afforded to the sick man, by the loss of blood, was exactly what Mr. Marston had anticipated. In a short time, he opened his eyes, heaved a deep sigh, and then holding out his hand to his daughter, smiled on her, though he could not speak. Kate's pleasure was beyond expression. As her father slowly revived, and became able to swallow; she administered to him the restoratives ordered by the curate, and then, after watching by his bed-side another half-hour, she had the satisfaction of seeing him fall into a calm, untroubled sleep, such as he had not had for months.

Then it was that the girl's tears began first to flow; but they fell silently, and they were tears of gratitude more than sorrow. Mr. Marston kindly took her hand, and led her from the room.

"He will sleep for many hours," he said, "and you, too, poor child, must have

rest. You need not tell me how much you have undergone; I understand it all; but all cause for immediate anxiety has ceased; and I must take care of you as well as of your father."

"God bless you, sir," said Kate, pressing the curate's hand, "you have saved my father's life. I have indeed passed through terrible days and nights, since I last saw you; I have much to tell you.

"Not now!" answered the curate. "Be assured you have found a home under my roof, till your father is well enough to bear removal; and he wishes for change. Rest is all you must now think of; and I will not even allow old Mary to see you, till you have slept. Go into this little room, next your father's, and lie down on the bed at once," and he opened an inner door, as he spoke.

"But, should my father awake, and ask for me; or should he become worse?" she said, looking anxiously in the curate's face.

“In either case, I will send for you,” he replied. “Mary is in a room close to your father ; and all shall be cared for ; so sleep in peace.”

“You are very kind, sir,” said the girl “but indeed, I cannot sleep. We have not walked far to-day ; and I am not weary. I would gladly watch by my father’s bedside.”

“I will send Mary to him,” answered the old gentleman, “and if you will not take repose, you must come with me into my study.”

So saying, he led the way, in silence, into his little book-room ; and Kate followed without further objection.

CHAPTER X.

A garden clothed with greens and fruits,
And intermixed with flowery roots;
A walk with well mow'd greensward laid,
Where I may stroll, in sun, or shade;
A terrace rais'd, whence I survey
The market folk, who pass that way;
Thus joyous do I pass my life,
Stranger to tumult, or to strife.

Cowper.

STRANGE indeed were Kate's feelings, at finding herself so suddenly an inmate of the house of Leonard Marston's uncle; and had she known of the painter's residence in the neighbourhood, her agitation would probably have been greatly increased. But it was, in truth, her remembrance of

him, and of his relationship to the worthy curate, which gave everything around her a peculiar charm; and made her heart beat with unusual quickness, as she addressed the kind old gentleman.

The curate closed the door after they entered his study; and made the girl sit down on his sofa, before he drew a chair for himself.

"Oh Mr. Marston," cried Kate, as soon as they were alone, "how can I thank you for all your kindness; how can I be grateful enough, for having found you at such a fearful moment, when even Heaven's mercy seemed to forsake me?"

"Heaven never forsakes the meek and lowly of heart," answered the curate.

"I was sure you would harbour no enmity against my father," she continued; "I felt certain you must understand, that it was disease, and not ill temper, or ingratitude which had made him behave so strangely towards you, sir; and often, when trouble came thick upon me, I longed to

write to you; but I knew not where you lived, after you left the city."

"My nephew Leonard told me lately, he had seen you in London," answered the old man.

The crimson blushes which covered Kate's face at this sudden mention of the painter's name, might have excited the attention of any common observer; but the worthy curate was too simple-minded, and unsuspicious, particularly with regard to what are commonly called affairs of the heart, to attach any peculiar meaning to her agitation.

"Yes, sir," she replied, in a tremulous voice, "Mr. Leonard was very kind to us. He found us by mere accident, at a time, when, but for his assistance, we must have gone to the workhouse, or starved in the streets. He forgot to tell me where you had removed to."

"Then you have not come down to Brookdale in search of me?"

"Oh, no, sir! As I have told you, we

did not know where you lived. But my father had strange fancies in his head."

"He was aware, perhaps, that my nephew was staying at Sir Charles Trenton's, in this neighbourhood."

"Is that possible!" exclaimed Kate, with astonishment. "My father did not even know that. Mr. Leonard told us that he was acquainted with Lady Trenton; and that she was gone into the country, but nothing more. Does the family really live near this place?"

"Yes, at that fine house you must have observed, amongst the woods on the hill; it is called Easton Court," answered Mr. Marston. "My nephew has come down there, to paint several pictures for the Baronet. Unluckily, I have been absent, ever since his arrival, on business, and have not seen him yet, as I only returned home last night. I am expecting a visit from him every moment."

"There is some gentleman coming up

the garden now, sir, I had better leave you," replied Kate, blushing all over.

"No, no, stay where you are. It can be no one but my dear boy, and I will go out, and meet him."

So saying, the good curate left the room.

It was lucky for Kate, that she was thus left alone, for a few minutes, to prepare herself for her meeting with Leonard, and in some measure to subdue the agitation which the mere mention of his name had excited. The fatigue and anxiety she had undergone, had greatly changed her ; and though her mind was still strong, her nerves were much weakened. Poor girl ! her heart beat tumultuously, and even her father was forgotten, during that short interval of solitude. She durst not look from the window at the meeting between the curate and his nephew ; but she listened eagerly to the distant tones of the painter's well known voice ; and she involuntarily

clasped her hands firmly together, when, after the lapse of a few minutes, his steps approached the study door.

Old Mr. Marston entered first, and then turning back with a smile, to his nephew, he said—

“Come in, Leonard, here is an old acquaintance waiting to see you!”

The girl was standing with her back towards the window, and her face was shaded by her bonnet ; and the painter, whose eyes were dazzled by the sudden change from the sunshine without, and who had no expectation of meeting her there, did not at first recognize his old play-fellow. But it was only for a moment, that he looked coldly and enquiringly at her ; then, suddenly pronouncing her name, he sprang forward, and held out both his hands towards her.

Kate looked anxiously and timidly in his face, curtsied with a quiet smile, and then finding she could not avoid it, she shook hands with him. And yet she had never before

been afraid of her old companion; it was the consciousness of her own feelings, which alone caused her embarrassment.

"This is indeed an agreeable surprise," said Leonard, sitting down beside her. "You surely have not come here alone."

"Oh! no," she replied, and she blushed deeply, for a fear crossed her mind that the artist might imagine she had come thither in pursuit of him. "My father brought me here, and I was even ignorant that Brookdale was now your uncle's residence."

"Then your father is also here?"

"Oh, yes! Mr. Marston has saved his life; he is now lodged in this house, and still very ill," was Kate's soft reply.

The curate observing the girl's agitation, and supposing it was caused by her anxiety on her father's account, here interfered, and related the manner in which he had found D'Arcy in the church; and the circumstances which had since occurred.

"But what could have induced the poor

old man to come such a distance from London?" inquired Leonard, turning to Kate.

"You saw enough when you last visited us there, sir, to know that my poor father's mind has been sadly weakened by his sufferings, since my mother's death," answered the girl, with trembling hesitation; for it was at all times very painful to her, to make any allusion to her parent's malady. "Soon after we last saw you, he received a visit from Sir Charles Trenton, which made him much more unsettled than usual, and after talking a great deal about business, and expressing an extraordinary anxiety to have some affair settled before his death, he got up early one morning, and set off to come down here."

"But what peculiar attraction directed his steps to Brookdale, more than to any other part of the country," asked the curate.

"My mother's family belonged to this place," said Kate. "She was born and

married here, and I suppose his love for her was the first cause of his wishing to come, though afterwards, he talked a great deal about wanting to find some papers, hidden in the church."

"Ah, that accounts for his going there during the funeral," returned the curate. "But did he find anything?"

"No, sir. He and I removed a stone from one of the old tombs; but when he put his hand into the hole it left, he found nothing; and the shock this disappointment gave him, was so great, that he fell senseless on the steps of the altar, where, as if sent by a merciful Providence, your good uncle, Mr. Leonard, came to my assistance,"

"All this is very strange," said the painter; "but your father's state renders it very difficult to decide how much of truth, or of delusion, may have influenced his conduct. But what astonishes me most of all, is, the visit of Sir Charles

Trenton. Are you sure it was that gentleman whom you saw in London ?”

“Oh, yes,” said Kate ; “at least, he said he was Sir Charles Trenton, and he insisted on speaking with my father, on business, though I told him the danger of doing so. As I had foreseen, his questions redoubled my father’s excitement, and were, no doubt, the cause of his leaving London the following morning.”

“Poor Kate,” returned Leonard, kindly, “you must have had a fearful journey.”

“We came part of the way on foot, and I had great fears at first ; but as we advanced, my father’s mind became calmer, and I regained my courage. The money you were so kind as to give me, Mr. Leonard, enabled me to pay for our places by the railroad, for a considerable distance, or I know not how we should ever have got here. My father’s strength seemed quite exhausted at last.”

“It is really wonderful, that he did so much,” rejoined the painter. “His shat-

tered frame appeared very unequal to such fatigue."

"The excitement of his mind supported him," returned the girl; "but even that gave way at last; and I am afraid to think what may be the consequence of all he has lately suffered."

"Be of good cheer, my good child," said the clergyman. "James D'Arcy and you are both better here, under my roof, than in a poor lodging in the bad air of Spital-Fields; and I will take care, that my old neighbour is properly attended to. I have sent into the town for a physician to-day, and we will hope, that, with judicious treatment, he may yet be entirely restored to health."

"How can I sufficiently thank you, sir," answered Kate, her eyes overflowing with tears of gratitude. "It is too true, my father has never had proper advice. Doctors are too dear for poor people like us to pay, and he never could bring his mind to apply to the parish. He went once to a

physician, who gave advice to the poor gratis ; but he was only a young man trying to get into practice, and the medicines he gave him did him more harm than good."

"Oh, yes," rejoined Mr. Marston, "I know well that all the difficulties the poor have to struggle with in health, are ten times multiplied by sickness. The best medical advice is only for the rich ; and worse still, the miseries of bed-ridden old age and long suffering, are redoubled to the poor, by the want of common comforts and common necessities. Though money cannot save from death, the want of it adds fearful agonies to the pangs of disease. To alleviate this evil, I have arranged two rooms in my house, and call them my hospital. Your father lies in one of them. I have several beds, and proper linen, to lend in cases of great poverty, and great suffering. I have all the other articles required in a sick room, and to be of service in cases of immediate danger, I

have myself learned both to cup and to bleed."

"Oh sir, you were always good to the poor," answered Kate, "and many a broken spirit, have you cheered with hopes of heaven."

A servant girl came in, at this moment, to say that old D'Arcy was awake, and had inquired for his daughter. Kate eagerly flew to the sick man's room, and though she found that he had again sunk into slumber, she remained watching at his bedside. She felt the need of solitude, though not of sleep, to repose her wearied spirit.

For several minutes after Kate left the study, Leonard Marston sat lost in profound thought, as if totally unconscious of his uncle's presence. He had come to Brookdale that morning, with the full determination of disclosing to his uncle his feelings and position, with respect to Miss Carrington; only excepting the extraordinary encouragement he had received from Lady

Trenton, which his promise of secrecy prevented him disclosing.

Full of exultation, he had been, on his first arrival at the vicarage, more anxious to announce his hopes of success, than to ask the advice of his uncle; and in the intoxication of passion, he had forgotten all the obstacles, which he had once seen, to his union with the beautiful Emily. He had thought only of her attractions, and of her flattering preference for himself. The sudden sight of Kate D'Arcy had at once changed the tenour of his thoughts. Old remembrances were awakened, old associations renewed. The engrossing imagination of the hour was dispelled, and he was again Leonard Marston, the poor curate's orphan nephew, the aspiring painter, the strong-minded man of the people, alike independent of fortune and of fashion.

When he listened to the story of Kate's journey alone, and on foot, with her feeble old father,—when he contemplated her quiet self-devotion, and the unwearying

labours of her love—her uncomplaining patience amidst deprivation and sorrow—her industry, her gentleness, and hopeful resignation to the will of Heaven, he involuntarily compared her with the brilliant and spoilt child of luxury, whose charms had latterly banished all his former notions of excellence from his mind.

The beauty of Kate D'Arcy's features, and her countenance expressive of all the tender and noble feelings of her uncontaminated mind and heart, was undoubtedly beauty of a much higher order, than the fascinating loveliness of Miss Carrington. Even the painter was struck by this, when he met her, so unexpectedly, in the curate's parlour, where even her humble attire, and shrinking modesty, seemed to heighten her personal charms. Leonard would readily have acknowledged his admiration of the weaver's daughter, for he believed he loved her as a sister ; but when the difference in the characters of Emily and Kate forced itself upon

his mind, with something like regret, he endeavoured to banish the feeling, and to persuade himself, that Miss Carrington also possessed all the virtues belonging to her station ; that she was generous, refined, noble, and disinterested ; that she had given him the strongest proofs of attachment, and that her heart was capable of the tenderest and most amiable feelings of her sex, although she had not been disciplined in the hard school of adversity.

It must not be supposed that Marston, in his preference for Emily Carrington, was in the slightest degree influenced either by her position, or her fortune. He would have sought a union with her more willingly had she possessed neither ; but she had completely fascinated his ardent imagination, and though his reason warned him, at times, that his happiness might not be assured by such a union, it was soon silenced by the louder voice of passion.

This struggle in his mind, had, at the

commencement of his acquaintance with the beautiful Emily, been very strong, but was gradually forgotten, during his daily intercourse with her at Easton Court, and now, only faintly revived, by his meeting with Kate D'Arcy. But he felt, nevertheless, that the time was then past for hesitation, and he must at once speak plainly to his uncle.

“ Well, Leonard, my boy,” said the curate, before his nephew could make up his mind how to commence his disclosures, “ I am delighted I have got home again, whilst you are still at Easton Court. I have heard great things of your works, which make me both proud and happy in my old age. You are painting two pictures for Sir Charles Trenton, they tell me. I hope you spend your time in the country agreeably ?”

“ In some respects, delightfully,” was Leonard's reply. “ But I cannot say, that I find the country gentlemen have either much taste, or knowledge of art, though

everybody thinks it necessary to talk about it. I hear some very extraordinary criticism at times, and the most perfect works are often the most abused."

"And what do you say in these cases?"

"Hold my tongue; what can I do better?—Artists are supposed to be entirely incompetent to judge of art, and the ignorant rich always believe their own judgment to be infallible."

"But surely you have had some enlightened men in the house?"

"Yes! Mr. Thornton, an old college friend of yours, was an exception to the general insipidity. He regretted much that you were from home."

"I am glad to hear he had not forgotten me," answered the curate. "I should have liked to have seen him again, for we once spent happy days together. But you say nothing about the ladies, Leonard; surely you find some of them agreeable."

"My dear sir, that is exactly the sub-

ject on which I came here to speak with you," returned the young man, arising, to his uncle's great astonishment, and pacing the room in extreme agitation.

"Indeed, Leonard!" said the old man, smiling, "is it possible you have fallen in love?"

"Something of the kind," replied Leonard, laughing, and seating himself again, with somewhat more composure. "I want to consult you, my dear uncle, before the final die is cast."

"I will give you such advice as I can," said the curate, "but you know, Leonard, I have had no great experience in these matters. I am sure, any lady you prefer would be certain to be worthy of my approbation, for you would not choose lightly."

"The lady, sir, is Miss Carrington."

"What, Lady Trenton's heiress? Leonard, Leonard," returned the simple-hearted old man, "are you wise to trust your happiness, in the keeping of a high-

bred woman of fashion, whose tastes and habits—nay, whose principles, must be widely different from your own.”

“Emily Carrington differs widely from all by whom she is surrounded,” answered the painter, “or she would have shown no preference for me.”

“She may appear different to other votaries of fashion, whilst she is in love, certainly,” returned his uncle; “but she may not always wish to set the opinions of her own class at defiance; and I must ask, are you certain, that she really prefers you. It is possible, even if she has encouraged your attentions, that she has only been playing with your feelings, for her passing amusement; and, though pleased by the admiration of a man of talent, has never dreamt of marrying a penniless artist.”

“Oh! no, sir; no!” cried Leonard, forgetting, in his eagerness to defend Miss Carrington from any suspicion of coquetry, the long doubts he had himself entertained,

“if you knew her, you would never imagine her to be capable of anything so heartless, and so cruel. She is all generosity and enthusiasm, and as artless and sincere, as if she had been brought up in a country village.”

“Well then, my dear boy, if she is such an angel, I can only advise you to marry her as quickly as possible. Have you proposed?”

“Not exactly,” answered the young man, with some embarrassment; “but she has given me great encouragement, and I may venture to say, that a mutual friend has assured me of success, if I can find means to marry her without delay.”

“And is this friend to be depended on?”

“Entirely!” was Leonard’s reply. “Were I at liberty to tell her name, you would not hesitate to sanction my acting, at once, on her advice.”

“But why should it be necessary to hurry forward a marriage?”

“I am told that Sir Charles Trenton, for certain reasons of his own, will most strenuously oppose my marriage with his ward, although by her great uncle’s will, she was of age, and fully at liberty to marry according to her own pleasure, when she reached the age of nineteen. To elude his opposition, and avoid disagreeable disputes, I have been advised to endeavour to obtain Miss Carrington’s consent, to keep our attachment secret, as long as possible ; nay, even till after the marriage ceremony had been performed. Should I succeed in this, would you promise, my dear uncle, to marry us.”

“I would not,” returned the curate, in the most decided tone. “No, my dear boy, whoever gave you such advice, committed a great error ; for that which is right to be done, ought always to be done openly ; and those whom God joins together, ought to be united in the sight of man. Your poor mother was married secretly, and if you knew all the misfor-

tunes which that single act of duplicity entailed upon her, you would be the last person upon earth, to ask me to assist you to commit a similar imprudence, or to think of doing so yourself. But I confess, I am at a loss to understand this affair ! You admit you have not yet made a proposal to Miss Carrington, and yet you profess yourself certain of her attachment ; and seem to think that you shall have little difficulty in persuading this rich and high-born heiress, to agree to a secret marriage with you !”

“ I have waited till your return, sir. I thought it my duty to obtain your consent, before I took so decided a step, as to enter into a positive engagement.”

“ And in this you have acted wisely, and I say so, for more reasons than you are aware of. First of all, I doubt, Leonard, I very much doubt, if Miss Carrington will ever give herself and her fortune to an artist, who, though he may possess acknowledged talent, and a daily

increasing reputation, is still not considered her equal, by her associates. But should she possess sufficient nobility of soul, to overlook this pitiful, social distinction, I must now inform you that there are certain circumstances connected with your family, of which you have hitherto been kept in ignorance, which are very likely, when disclosed, to prove an insurmountable bar to your union with Miss Carrington."

"Good Heaven, sir, to what can you allude? as your nephew, there can surely be no disgrace in a marriage with me?" demanded the painter, with extreme agitation.

"I have a long story to tell you," replied the curate, as if he had not heard this enquiry. "It is possible, I ought to have told it to you sooner; but, if my silence has been ill-judged, I have erred with the best intentions. I wished to spare you unnecessary pain."

"Is it possible, sir, that there have been secrets between us?" exclaimed Leonard,

with an expression of the deepest distress. "Is there a mystery where I thought all was clear and open as the light of day? If you have deceived me, in whom on this earth can I place confidence?"

"I have not deceived you, my son," answered Mr. Marston, with emotion. "I have only concealed facts, which it must have caused you much pain to know; and which, until the present moment, there appeared no necessity for communicating to you. But we are interrupted," cried the curate, arising, and going to the window, as the front door bell was rung long and loud. "There is a party on horseback, stopping at the gate. A servant has dismounted, and is at the door. Do you know them, Leonard?"

"It is Lady Trenton and Miss Carrington, Mr. Cosway, and some of the other gentlemen from Easton Court," returned the artist, with considerable agitation, after he had taken a survey of the strangers.

"I mentioned your return this morning

at breakfast; and they have, no doubt, come to welcome you home."

"Lady Trenton has been here, several times before," answered the old man, "but I owe the honour of Miss Carrington's visit to you, no doubt," said the curate.

"The ladies are coming up the garden, sir," returned his nephew. "Had we not better go to receive them?"

"By all means," said the curate; and they immediately left the room together.

"Oh, what a charming, picturesque old place," was the exclamation they heard uttered by Miss Carrington, as they descended the stone steps, to the long gravel walk, leading from the house to the old iron garden gate, where the ladies had left their pony carriage, and the gentlemen their horses.

Lady Trenton advanced and shook hands with the curate, whilst Emily, with one of her sweetest smiles, expressed her astonishment at finding Mr. Leonard Marston there; and her impatience to be

introduced to his uncle. Fresh air and exercise had heightened her bloom, and a certain timid confusion, which she involuntarily felt, as the artist led her up to the venerable old man, rendered her even more lovely and fascinating than usual.

The curate with fatherly benevolence, looked with undisguised admiration on the beautiful girl; and taking her hand in his, he expressed, even more by looks than by words, the pleasure her presence gave him.

“ I have heard much of you, my fair young lady,” he said, with old-fashioned gallantry ; “ but I now find what is seldom the case, that the original far surpasses the descriptions of your admirers ; and my nephew is an artist, you know, and has the privilege to embellish, where it is possible.”

The little hand of Emily trembled on Leonard’s arm ; and he was delighted to see the deep blush which covered her face, when the curate uttered these words. She smiled, but made no reply.

Lady Trenton changed the conversation, by saying, that before she went into the house, she hoped Mr. Marston would show her the alterations which she understood he had made in his garden.

These the worthy curate took great pride in showing, and he led the way, at once, to the other side of the house.

Though Cosway was a good deal annoyed by Leonard's engrossing all Miss Carrington's attention, he laughed and chatted with his usual volatile humour; keeping close to the lady's side, wherever the walks were broad enough to admit of three. Yet, though clothed in the semblance of good humour, there was much malice in his discourse.

"Upon my honour, this is quite an earthly paradise, formed for the abode of a pair of romantic lovers," he cried, switching his very tight boots with a little riding-whip. "I cannot imagine anything more necessary to the enjoyment of perfect bliss, than such a home, with a lovely

wife, half a dozen children, and a hundred and fifty pounds a-year."

"I fear the allowance would prove rather small for so large a family," said the curate, laughing. "I require somewhat more, though I am alone here, with a couple of servants."

"My dear sir, you must be shockingly extravagant," answered Cosway, gravely; "what can you possibly require with money, with such a garden as this, with poultry of every description; and cows, and pigs, no doubt. How happy and independent you must be, with neither London habits, nor London servants, nor carriages, nor horses, nor any of those encumbrances which seem invented only to consume large fortunes; sacrifices to fashion and opinion, which the unfortunate people, who live in the world, cannot do without."

"I did not know you were much encumbered in that way, Cosway," said Leonard, very quietly.

“Oh, I am not speaking of myself,” he replied, without the slightest confusion. “I am a bachelor, you know.”

“And so am I,” responded the curate.

“Ah, I beg your pardon,” replied the barrister, “I am perfectly aware of that. But when I admired your residence, I was thinking how a married man could get on, in such a retired way ; that is to say, if he were a philosopher ; one of those independent spirits, who follows his own fancy in everything, without troubling his head about what the rest of the world thinks or says of him. It is only such men who have the courage, now-a-days, to marry poor ! and upon my word, it must require a monstrous deal of nerve. Don’t you think Goethe’s picture of Charlotte’s cutting bread and butter, for half a dozen little children, most charming, and worthy of imitation, Miss Carrington ? particularly if they were her own pretty babes, and her husband a sort of Werter faced man, without a sixpence to leave them,

and scarcely enough in his lifetime to buy his own cigars."

"Oh, you incorrigible creature!" cried the lady, "you delight in destroying all the poetry of life."

"Because papas, and mamas, and large families don't live on poetry, but bread and butter, and a few more substantial things," said Cosway; "and there is a great scarcity of such provisions for younger brothers, now-a-days, or I should have been married long ago."

"You must marry a woman of fortune," returned Lady Trenton, in her gentle way.

"Your ladyship thinks so! I am exceedingly obliged; but I shall never marry for money. I have had plenty of opportunities; there are rich women, of low breeding, to be had in abundance; but I never could stand that sort of thing. When a man has neither family, nor fortune, nor other pretensions, to look high in a matrimonial speculation, he may be justi-

fied in selling his liberty, without taking the attractions of the lady into consideration ; but my life, as a bachelor, is too agreeable to be sacrificed without an equivalent, and I should detest being either dragged down, or dragged up by my wife."

" Then I fear you are likely to remain long unmarried," said Lady Trenton.

" It is quite certain I am, unless my position changes," replied the barrister, casting a look at Emily as he spoke. But she heard nothing he said ; her whole attention was engaged by Leonard Marston, who was pointing out to her one of the most beautiful points of view from the terrace.

Not a word of love was spoken by the artist, during that morning's interview, and yet, as the girl leant upon his arm, and looked up from time to time with a tinid, yet trusting confidence in his face, as if every word he uttered possessed for her an inexpressible charm, they both felt

the most entire conviction of their mutual attachment, and Miss Carrington, for the first time in her life, experienced the delightful assurance, that she was really and truly loved, not for her fortune, but for herself alone.

It would be common-place to say more of the feelings of two young, imaginative people, under the influence of passion. To such of our readers, as can neither remember, nor imagine such happiness, all descriptions would be vain.

Cosway saw all; but having found his attempts to interrupt the tide of Leonard Marston's good fortune were useless, he consoled himself, by hoping, that by the time his cousin, the Earl, died, Emily would have exhausted her romance, and would be ready to allow that his attractions were very superior to those of a penniless artist.

After having sufficiently admired the flowers and the bees, and the poultry, the curate begged the ladies to walk into his

parlour, and repose themselves before they left ; though he had nothing there to show them, he said, except one or two pictures painted by his nephew, when he was quite a youth. The whole party readily accepted the invitation.

To their great surprise, they found a table prettily covered with fruit and flowers, fresh butter, and new made bread, which old Mary, assisted by Kate D'Arcy, had arranged, and no one could refuse the old curate, when he pressed them to partake of his simple fare.

The pictures had been admired, and a large portfolio of drawings turned over, when Lady Trenton proposed their departure, as they should scarcely have time, she said, to reach Easton Court before dinner.

As they were passing along the hall, Kate D'Arcy came, without expecting to meet any one, from a side passage, leading to her father's room. In an instant

she retreated ; but before she had done so, the eyes of several of the party were upon her, and Cosway whispered in Miss Carrington's ear, that he was glad to see the worthy curate had prettier female attendants in his house than his old house-keeper. Emily blushed ; she felt, she knew not wherefore, disposed to be exceedingly angry. She, too, had made her observations ; but she had determined to ask no questions about the fair apparition, till she had an opportunity of speaking alone with Leonard.

When they reached their pony-carriage, Lady Trenton insisted on the painter's returning with them to Easton Court. She told old Mr. Marston, that it was impossible for her to spare his nephew that afternoon, as Sir Charles had invited a great admirer of art to dinner on purpose to meet him. There was room enough for him, she said, in the little carriage, with her and Miss Carrington. In fact, she

would take no refusal, and the proposal was too agreeable for the artist to feel much disposed to persist in giving one.

The curate begged him to return, if possible, on the morrow, and whilst his nephew was borne away, to enjoy the brightest hopes in the company of the object of his love, the old man returned to his study, to brood, with anxiety and apprehension, over the future.

Poor Kate D'Arcy, in the meanwhile, had sought to conceal herself, in deep humiliation and despair, in the darkness of her father's chamber. She wept almost unconsciously at times ; at others, she felt, in silence, the agony of a far deeper sorrow, than any which awakens tears.

Yet, why did she thus mourn ?—why at that hour, did she feel more desolate and forsaken, than she had ever before done ? It was not for her father she wept ; it was not her poverty which filled her heart with despair ! But she had watched the visitors from the window ; she had hearkened to

their voices, as they loitered amongst the flowers, and she could no longer doubt, that Leonard Marston would soon be the husband of another. Leonard, her old playfellow—her father's preserver, the secret idol of her thoughts, through years of long and solitary deprivation, to whose memory she had clung as to life itself, in her deepest sorrow, though without knowing that her attachment was love. Leonard, the only human being who had given utterance in her hearing to the high and beautiful thoughts, which were those of her own soul—the noble painter, the gentle friend, was lost to her for ever. She felt that the only star, which had guided her over the rugged path of life, was for ever clouded, and all strength and resolution forsook her, as if she was weighed down by the heavy shadow of death.

“Kate, my child, are you there?” murmured old D’Arcy, feebly stirring in his bed.

“Yes father,” was all she could reply,

and she went to the side of the pallet, and knelt down, and hid her face in the bed clothes, and wept bitterly.

“Poor child, do not cry so, I cannot bear it,” he said, extending his arm and laying his withered hand upon her head. “Though I feel I shall not be long here, you will come to rejoin me, one day, in heaven. Don’t cry, Kate, we shall be happier there than in this world,”

“Yes, father, yes,” was all the girl could reply. She could not cheer him ; she could not tell him he was better ; that the danger of death was past ; nor talk to him of the hope of returning health. She thought the best thing for them both was, to die. But she kissed her father’s withered hand with silent love, and wetted it with her tears.

She had not even the consolation of being able to turn to her only parent for comfort and support under her affliction. She had to conceal the deep sorrow which was gnawing at her heart, and endeavour

to appear calm, lest the slightest agitation should disturb the flickering light, which reason seemed once more to shed athwart her father's mind.

Happily the old man again slumbered before long, and Kate could lie down, silent and still, on a mattress at his side ; though many hours of the night had passed before the weaver's daughter forgot her cares in sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

Whilst Luxury, hand in hand with ruin, moves
To do the Devil's work, and call it Love's.

ELLIOTT.

THERE was a large dinner party that day at Easton Court. Mr. Lesley dined there, with many other gentlemen of the neighbourhood, and so completely was the lovely heiress surrounded by admirers, that Leonard Marston had no opportunity of speaking to her, till the gentlemen came into the drawing-room, after dinner.

The expressive glances which were then exchanged between the lovers did not escape the observation of Lesley, and he eagerly sought an opportunity of speaking apart to old Lady Charlotte, on the subject. He told her that he no longer placed the slightest reliance on her former promises of assistance, being now perfectly convinced by the tokens of intimacy he had for some time remarked between Miss Carington and the artist, that the affection of the young lady was already disposed of, and that it would be folly in him to persist, for the present at least, in paying her court.

“You are easily disheartened,” was the reply of the cunning old woman of the world, “but, for my part, I do not believe there is anything serious in this giddy girl’s preference for the painter. It is a mere fancy, which, if not contradicted, will soon wear itself out.”

“It appears on the contrary, to become stronger every day,” was the reply.

“Perhaps it may, till a decided declaration is made—but the girl is proud—she is ambitious too, and the very idea of marriage with a penniless artist, will at once frighten all idea of love out of the little coquette’s head. Wait patiently and quietly, for, believe me, your case is by no means hopeless ; but spoilt girls are wilful creatures, and must be left to have their own way.”

“The fellow has audacity for anything,” said Lesley, in an exceedingly bad humour, “and I see no way of turning the tables on him, either. I hope you have not forgotten, that if I am not married to the fair Emily before six months are out, you are two hundred pounds in my debt.”

“Oh! no, I never forget my debts of honour,” replied the old gambler. “And I hope you have not forgotten that if you succeed, you are my debtor to three times that amount.”

“No, no, my memory is quite as good

as your own, and I shall be delighted, when called upon, to pay you the money. But I see no chance of it. This Marston is a dangerous fellow to meddle with. It appears to me that the lady has overcome all the prejudices she may have entertained against artists ; and as to money, there is no doubt she has enough for both. But cannot you find out anything about his private life ; something to cast a slur upon his character ! if we could do that in any way, if he could be only convicted of painting a bad picture, or giving himself vulgar airs, I am convinced his influence would be, at once, at an end. But he knows well what he is about, and I fear it will be impossible to find a way to make him either contemptible, or ridiculous. Do you know anything of his birth and family connexions ?”

“ I understand he is the nephew of the present curate of Brookdale !” answered the old lady.

“So I have been told,” answered Lesley, “our difficulties are greatly increased by his having respectable relations.”

“I am not quite certain of that!” returned old Lady Charlotte, with a very knowing expression in her keen, black eyes. “There is something mysterious in that quarter; but I hope, I have got on the right track, and I shall know more before long. I am convinced you have no reason to despair.”

“Something, it is clear, must be done quickly,” answered Lesley, “for the smiles and glances, which are exchanged this evening, have a deep significance. Look at them now! and this has been going on for half an hour, at least.”

“I have looked,” said Lady Charlotte, again turning her keen eyes towards the painter and Miss Carrington, who were sitting apart, in an oriel window, talking, not gaily, but tenderly, in low accents, often interrupted by long pauses, during which they were both evidently agitated

and embarrassed, and yet totally unmindful of all the other persons in the room. Lady Charlotte, though she had taken so much pains to encourage Lesley to persevere in his addresses to the heiress, saw enough that evening to make her exceedingly doubtful of his success, and to convince her that she had made a very great mistake, when she had invited the artist to her house, and encouraged his flirtation with the heiress, under the idea of being able to turn his attachment to better account than she could the ambition of Mr. Lesley. She had soon seen enough of Marston to understand, that no under-hand intrigues were to be attempted with him. She could not even venture to hint at arrangements, which she had long ago fully discussed with Mr. Lesley; and she now began to fear that the heiress would slip through her fingers, without her being able to turn her beauty and fortune to any good account.

But Lady Charlotte was not easily

disheartened when money was in question ; moreover, her avarice and her wits were both sharpened, by her having lost more money at play, than suited her narrow revenue ; and she resolved, that evening, at all hazards, to find some speedy means for interrupting the good understanding between Emily and Leonard Marston. She felt so certain of success, that a malicious smile of triumph distorted her withered, old, painted face, as she silently watched the happiness she was bent on destroying. To Mr. Lesley, she said, she was more convinced than ever, that he had nothing serious to apprehend, from a rival in Marston's position in life.

“Don't interrupt them, on any account,” she added, “you will only excite the girl's enmity against yourself, by any untimely interference. We must excite no suspicions. See, Sir Charles Trenton is going up to them ; there can be no offer made to-night.”

“Yes, Sir Charles Trenton,” answered

Lesley, with a bitter sneer. "He is as sharp sighted as I am, and from the same motive, I suspect."

"Lady Trenton appears in very declining health. I don't think it likely that she will be very long lived. Perhaps other people may be of my opinion," returned the wily old lady, almost in a whisper, and she just raised her eyes, one moment, to observe the effect her insinuation produced upon her companion. But she could read nothing in his quiet face. It was impossible to pierce beyond his mask of passive tranquillity, when he chose to assume it. Though the darkest thoughts were in his heart, he betrayed not the slightest emotion, and he stood there so calm and still, that any one but Lady Charlotte would have supposed he had not heard her words. But he had heard them, and understood them; their import was nothing new to him. To all those men, who speculated on marrying the heiress, Lady Trenton's death was a subject of serious considera-

tion. Oh, money! money!—how many hearts have you hardened. Of how little value do you make the life of another in the eyes of him, who is waiting and longing for your inheritance. Even the best of souls, when they catch a glimpse of a legacy, are very apt to persuade themselves, that death would be a happy release to the poor sufferer, who gives them such a proof of affection; quite forgetting how much they dread the grave themselves. Miss Carrington was the only person who was quite satisfied with her present possession of thirty thousand pounds, which she had inherited from her father, and considered it as a matter of course, that her cousin would live to enjoy her own estates, till she was a very old woman.

What were Lady Trenton's thoughts on this matter, no one knew. She had been more cheerful that evening than for some months past, and the brightness of her eyes, and the unusual animation of her manner, had been observed with apprehension, by

more than one of the company, as symptoms of returning health. It was true, that fresh hopes had been excited in her mind, by her recent conversation with the artist; but the disease, which was wearing away her life, was unabated in its virulence.

The poor lady no sooner saw her husband go up to Marston and Emily, than she suddenly broke off the conversation in which she was engaged with Cosway, and went over to the oriel window.

“Mr. Marston,” she said, taking a seat next the artist, to the great annoyance of Sir Charles, who immediately arose and walked away, “I want to ask you some further questions about that beautiful young person I saw, when we were coming away from your uncle’s, this morning. I thought I recognized her; for her face is one not easily forgotten. It has occurred to me since, that she bore a strong resemblance to the poor girl, who gave a silk dress for me in Spital Fields. She is certainly quite as beautiful.”

“ I saw her likewise,” said Miss Carrington, interposing; and her colour heightened as she spoke. “ It struck me immediately, she must be the original of the beautiful portrait I once saw at your rooms in London.”

“ Strange to say, both these suppositions are correct,” answered Marston, “ Kate D’Arcy was the play-fellow of my childhood, and my first model. During my absence in Italy, her father, who, as well as herself, is a silk-weaver, was long out of work, and fell into bad health. Their distress was very great; when your Ladyship was kind enough to give her employment. The old man, in a state of great mental excitement, came down with her, lately, to the village of Brookdale, where his wife was born; and exhausted by a long journey on foot, was found by my uncle, almost in a dying state. Mr. Marston, who never hesitates to relieve misfortune, has taken both the old man and his daughter

under his roof. It is feared that the weaver is dying."

"How very extraordinary!" exclaimed Emily. "I fancied they had probably come from London to seek assistance from you!"

"They did not know of my being here," answered Leonard, "and were equally ignorant of my uncle being the curate of the parish. But old D'Arcy is in a strange, excited state, and had some extraordinary fancy for coming hither."

"Mr. Marston must be a most excellent man," said Lady Trenton. "I honour him for his charity. I owe this poor girl some reparation for the long anxiety, the delay of my payment caused her; and I should be glad to see and speak with her, if you think she could leave her father, to come for an hour or two to Easton Court!"

"He is too ill at present, to be left," said Marston, "for he has been so long accustomed to his daughter's nursing, that her absence might increase the agitation

of his mind ; but should he recover, I will not fail to inform her of your Ladyship's wish to see her."

"Her mother was born at Brookdale, I think you said? Do you chance to remember her name."

"Yes, her father, John Dent, was the parish clerk. The woman's Christian name was Jane."

"And both she and her father are dead, I presume?" enquired Lady Trenton, in a very low voice ; and she glanced, at the same time, towards Sir Charles Trenton, as if to be certain that he was out of hearing.

"Yes, they are both dead," returned Marston, somewhat astonished, that Lady Trenton should think it worth while, to ask so many questions about these poor people."

Lady Trenton continued, for several minutes after she had spoken the last words, to play with a paper knife, she

took up from the table; and though her eyes were cast down, her sad countenance was expressive of deep and earnest thought.

Marston watched her with deep commiseration. His recent interview with her, had made him too well acquainted with her manifold causes of sorrow, for him to be deceived, either by her assumed cheerfulness, or the aid which dress had lent that evening, to conceal the ravages of disease. His heart bled for her; but he carefully avoided the slightest manifestation of his feeling; and treated her with the most distant respect.

A short silence followed her enquiries about Kate; and she then arose, and left the room. But though Emily was thus left once more at liberty to renew her flirtation with the artist, a constraint had come over them both; and it was almost a relief when Cosway, with his usual easy audacity, came and sat down beside them, which

effectually prevented all further intimate conversation between the lovers, during the remainder of the evening.

Emily was exceedingly annoyed, and behaved to him with marked rudeness, but he did not choose to understand her; he had gained his object, for the moment; and he flattered himself her anger would not be lasting.

Lesley kept aloof the whole evening, pretending to talk politics with some of the elderly gentlemen; but he contrived to keep a sharp eye on all that was going on; and in spite of all the encouragement Lady Charlotte had given him, he was exceedingly discontented with the result of his observations.

When Lady Trenton retired that evening, to her dressing-room, she was, as usual, insulted by the attendance of her waiting-woman, Mrs. Clayton, who always appeared before her with the most cringing servility. As usual, the lady dispensed with her services, as quickly as possible;

and the Abigail, rejoiced to be set at liberty, walked off in obsequious silence.

Mrs. Clayton had, however, other business to transact that night, on her own account ; and proceeding along a softly carpeted passage, to a distant part of the house, she stopped at the further end of it, and knocked at a chamber door.

“Come in !” responded the shrill voice of Lady Charlotte; and the waiting-woman obeyed this summons with alacrity.

The old lady was sitting before the fire, in an easy chair, impatiently awaiting her visitor; and so great a change had taken place in her appearance, since she left the drawing-room, that, but for her keen black eyes, she could not have been recognized. Her hair, no longer concealed by her glossy wig, was white as driven snow; her teeth lay in two pearly rows, beside her on the table; and her jaws divested of this support closed together in puckers, like a pair of empty bellows; her untied cap left her withered neck quite bare; and white pow-

der and red powder having all been washed away, her dried old skin looked all crumpled and shrivelled together, like half burnt leather. She wore a flannel dressing-gown by no means clean; and a night cap, with incomprehensible borders, gave most unnatural dimensions to her head. She was a fearful example of vanity, and other seemingly vices of civilization, in their last stage of existence. There was a very strong smell of musk in the room; but the odour of ether, that innocent substitute for female dram-drinking, was yet more powerful. When the old lady opened her mouth, it was quite overpowering.

Mrs. Clayton bolted the door behind her, as she entered; and then came close up to the table. Lady Charlotte did not forget her rank so far, as to ask her to take a chair.

"Well, my trusty messenger," she said, turning her keen eyes full upon the woman's face, "what have you learnt?"

"Nothing of consequence either against

Mr. Marston, or the girl," she answered, in a very familiar tone. "It is all charity, it appears, and nothing more. Mr. Marston's the curate's, character stands so high. that it would be dangerous, I find, to spread any scandalous reports abroad, concerning his nephew."

"That is bad," answered the old witch, taking out a snuff box, which she kept for secret indulgence.

"It is so, however, and it cannot be helped," answered the Abigail. "And surely, my lady, it could never have been of much use to accuse a fine, handsome, young man of gallantry ; for if Miss Carington is as much in love, as every body says shs is, she would never have discarded him for being a little gay. Lord bless you, ma'm, young ladies don't mind these things, now a days. They think it rather a feather in a man's cap. But I have something better than that to tell you. I understand that this old Mr. Marston, the curate, never had a brother."

“Well, what then?” inquired old Lady Charlotte, in a snappish tone. “What do I care about the old hypocrite’s relations?”

“What then!” cried Clayton triumphantly, “why then, to be sure, it is clear that this painting man cannot be his brother’s son,—that cannot be disputed!”

“Can such a thing be possible? has the clerical hypocrite invented a lie to conceal his own sins?” cried Lady Charlotte, her eyes sparkling with malicious brightness.

“I have it from good authority,” returned the servant. “I have a brother who lives as butler in the part of the country the curate comes from, and I set him a fishing and a finding out all about his family and connexions.”

“And he has written to you?”

“Yes, my lady. I have had a letter this very day.”

“And what does he tell you?”

“What I have just repeated to you. Mr.

Marston, the curate of Brookdale, never had a brother."

"Speak out, who is this man he calls his nephew," inquired the old woman eagerly.

"He had a sister," pursued Mrs. Clayton almost in a whisper. "This sister ran off with a gentleman of high family. Some say she was secretly married, but there was no proof of that. It was known she had a child; but as it has inherited no property from its father, as his rightful heir, it is plain it was a natural child. It was a son."

"Good heaven! and that son, no doubt, is Leonard Marston!" exclaimed Lady Charlotte, stretching her withered face half across the table, with breathless anxiety. "And he is a natural son,—that settles the business, certainly."

"Most likely, I should think," returned the Abigail, with a smile of effrontery, which made her face perfectly diabolical.

"You know as well as I, great gentlemen will have natural children, though they do go to church, and hear all the parson says against fornication. It is very odd, though they hear so much about another world, they always seem to forget it, somehow, when they are tempted with the pleasures of this. Isn't it odd, my lady?"

"It is no business of ours," answered the old devotee of fashion, in a very sharp voice.

"No, no more it is now, my lady, I beg your pardon, whatever it may have been once, when I was in your ladyship's service, twenty-years ago."

Old Lady Charlotte looked up, and her black eyes fired a volley of darts at the impertinent Abigail. Could she have had her wish, they would all have been poisoned. As it was they fell harmless.

"Well, my lady, as I was saying," she responded with a smile, "this young man, Mr. Leonard Marston, bears his mother's name, I find."

“This is most important, if we could be quite sure,” said the lady.

“Sure indeed,” cried Clayton. “I wonder what you expect to find out, that can be clearer? If you want to break off this match, tell the story openly, and let them deny it who can. Miss Carrington is too proud to marry a bastard, take my word for it, and when you put all together, you must see, as plain as I do, that this artist can be nothing else. At all events nobody knows who his father was.”

“I suppose it must be true,” said the old lady, playing a tune on the arm of her chair, with her withered fingers, and looking very steadily into the fire, so that Mrs. Clayton did not clearly know what to make of her.

“Suppose, indeed!” she cried. “I suppose your ladyship wants to make light of my news, that you may have the less to pay for it. But I am not to be put off, with such shams. I am sure such a secret is worth

far more, than if I had only spread abroad, that the young gentleman had a mistress. Shall I let the story come to Miss Carrington's ears, my lady?"

"Oh, no!" answered Lady Charlotte, "I will take care of that; and be perfectly tranquil; I shall also take care that your services are properly rewarded. You and I are old friends, Clayton, and I never neglect old friends."

"Well, my Lady, I know you always have been very considerate," returned the abigail, "and I must say, I like to do you any little service in my power. You are so sharp, and just understand the world, and how to manage it, as well as if you did not belong to selfish, helpless great folks. It is really a pleasure to give you a hint, for you have an eye as sharp as a hawk."

The old lady in spite of her pride, chuckled at this vulgar compliment, for she, in truth, piqued herself on her skill, in

turning the ignorance and follies of her class, to her own advantage.

“You are a very clear headed, active woman, Clayton,” she returned. “I have always thought so, and I shall not fail to serve you, when I have an opportunity. I think you said a place in the excise would suit that young man you were speaking to me about?”

“Exactly, my lady! Or on one of the railways; anything about a hundred a-year. He is very clever and deserving, I assure you.”

“And his name? I have mislaid that.”

“Edward Foster, my lady.”

“I shall not forget,” said Lady Charlotte, and she wrote the name down in her pocket book, and coughed several times. “Only, Clayton, you must have patience, there are so many applicants now-a-days, and people in power have so many near connexions.”

“Well, but your ladyship with your

ladyship's talents, must have claims on a great many gentlemen, I feel sure," persisted the abigail, "and one good turn deserves another, you know, my lady."

"Oh, yes, certainly!" answered the old woman, "I value your services highly, and will do all in my power for your nephew. So now, good night to you, I have some letters to write, before I go to bed."

"Your ladyship is very good," said the abigail, and with a slight obeisance she left the room.

"A nice set these fine folks are, to look down upon such as us," thought the woman, as she softly descended the back stairs. "A fine set, all intriguing and back-biting, and cheating one another, to the best of their abilities. And they expect us to look up to them, and worship them, like so many angels. Pretty angels, truly! and fine stories we servants could tell, if we were only to whisper the tenth part of the family secrets, that come into our keeping. Lady Trenton and Miss

Carrington, have both treated me like dirt, and expect I sha'nt resent it, I suppose. But they are mistaken there! I have just as proud a spirit as theirs, though interest makes me sneak in their presence.

CHAPTER XII.

Gold ! Gold ! Gold ! Gold !
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammer'd and roll'd,
Heavy to get and light to hold ;
Stolen, honoured, bought and sold.
Price of many a crime untold.

Hood.

WHEN Mrs. Clayton left Lady Charlotte's room, she had still another visit to make, before she retired to rest. Having descended the back stairs, and passed some of the now deserted offices, she passed through the great library, and knocked at a door beyond. She did not however

wait for any answer, but immediately opened it, and entered without further ceremony. It was Sir Charles Trenton's private room. Library it could not be called, for not half a dozen books could have been found in it; but guns, fishing-rods, pipes, walking sticks and whips occupied every corner.

The Baronet was sitting lounging in an easy chair, in a Turkish silk dressing-gown and slippers, smoking a most exquisite cigar, with a glass of hot brandy-and-water, standing on a little table beside him. The fine gentleman, after playing the farce of social elegance, during the day, was enjoying the animal indulgence of smoking and drinking in perfect ease, which fashion denies, to men of his pretensions, in ladies' company. But, whatever artificial appearances may be assumed under the tyranny of fashion, the nature and secret pleasures of common-place men, in all classes, are essentially the same. Sir Charles Trenton might smoke better to-

bacco, and drink better brandy, than his coachman did, but both, equally preferred the tobacco and the brandy, to anything which the intellectual and refined part of society call elevated enjoyments.

"I beg pardon, if I interrupt you, Sir Charles," said Mrs. Clayton, as she entered and shut the door, "but I felt certain you were alone."

"Come in, come in; I *am* quite alone. Any new squabble with my Lady?" enquired the Baronet, who was always in a particularly good humour at this hour.

"Oh, thank goodness, she never speaks to me at all!" answered the woman, "but I have just come to tell you a few things you may like to know."

"Are the people all gone to bed?"

"Yes, every soul is out of the way," said the abigail.

"Well, what mystery have you discovered now?" said the baronet, holding his cigar between his fore and middle

fingers, whilst he spoke, and then recommencing smoking.

“It is about Mr. Marston, sir.”

“Confound Mr. Marston !”

“It seems other people have observed the intimacy between him and Miss Carrington, as well as yourself.”

“None but fools could be blind to it.”

“Mr. Lesley, and old Lady Charlotte, are determined, it seems, to secure the heiress for that gentleman if they can.”

“They will be very clever if they do.”

“They are getting uneasy about Mr. Marston, it seems, sir ; and they have been thinking of all manner of ways of dividing him from Miss Carrington.”

“So much the better—it will save me the trouble,” answered the baronet. “What have they done in the matter ?”

“Nothing yet, sir ; but I have found out for them, that he is not the son of the curate of Brookdale’s brother. Mr. Marston never had a brother. Marston was

the painter's mother's name, and so he cannot have been born in wedlock."

Sir Charles looked keenly at the abigail, and gave a shrill, low whistle.

"His mother's name was Marston! are you sure of that?" he enquired.

"Yes, quite sure."

"And have you not learnt what his father was called?"

"Perhaps, I have a suspicion, now I know his mother never was married, or at least never could prove she was married," answered Clayton, keeping her eyes fixed steadily on the baronet. "I think you must also recollect, sir, something about a marriage, which nobody could prove."

"Marston—Marston, the mother's name! What a block-head I was, that the name never struck me before," answered her master, without taking any further notice of Mrs. Clayton's insinuations.

"I am sure you must agree with me, sir, that when Miss Carrington hears that

Mr. Marston was not born in wedlock, she will have nothing more to say to him."

"Very likely," returned the baronet. "And you have told this to Lady Charlotte?"

"Yes, sir, this very night."

"Prudently, I hope."

"Very prudently," said the abigail. "I can tell a lie, and keep a secret, as well as a foreign ambassador, as you say sometimes, sir."

"That's capital ; Lesley may spread the story, and Emily will hate him the more for it. I have no wish to appear in the business, if I can avoid it. Only remember, Clayton, I should not wish the matter to be investigated further ! you understand me ?"

"Oh, yes ! sir, perfectly. But you need have no fears ; they may investigate as much as they please, they can find out nothing."

"I know they can discover nothing

really important," answered Sir Charles. "Only there are some subjects it is better the world should not be able to chatter about, that is all."

"I have only told Lady Charlotte the reports in circulation to Miss Marston's dishonour, in the parts where that lady was born. I was quite silent as to all which might have happened in this neighbourhood."

"But do you really mean me to understand that this Marston is the son of the girl who ran away with—"

"Certainly I do, sir," returned the abigail, promptly interrupting her master. "The curate of Brookdale, his uncle, comes from the same place he did ; he had an only sister, and has now a nephew, just the age *her* son must be!"

"Mrs. Clayton, you are a woman of talent," said the baronet, looking keenly at her, as if to ascertain whether she knew any more than she professed to know or not. He then drank very freely of the brandy and water,

“Well, sir, I hope you do think that is enough to break off the match,” said the wily woman.

“I hope so,” answered the baronet. “Confound the girl’s folly ! I cannot understand how she can demean herself by allowing a low fellow of an artist even to take the liberty of admiring her. Had I thought it possible, I never would have brought him into the house. I was on my guard against gentlemen ; but it never entered my head, she could forget herself so far as to take a fancy to a painter.”

“Oh, Sir Charles, a man of the world like you should know these spoilt young beauties are very wayward,” said Mrs. Clayton, with a very knowing smile. “But it wont last, sir, and you will have matters all your own way before long.”

“You believe so, Mrs. Clayton, do you ?” inquired the gentleman, slowly puffing the smoke from his mouth. “How do you think your lady’s health is going on ?”

“She is in a very declining state, sir,

you may depend upon that," answered the waiting-maid, and her eyes sparkled with a strange expression of intelligence and malice.

"I have thought her looking better for the last day or two, confound her!" was the baronet's reply.

"It is all false, sir, take my word for it; her cheerfulness is all false, and her good looks too. She is only more painted. She does what she can to appear to the best advantage; but it is quite certain she is sinking fast."

"This is exactly the same story you have told me, Mrs. Clayton, for the last year," returned the worthless husband; "but if she is sinking, I can only say, she is devilish long in coming to the ground."

"But she really is far worse lately," persisted Clayton. "That last quarrel you had with her about me was quite like a stroke. She has never been the same since."

"So much the better!" growled Sir

Charles. "If she does not know how to behave herself, she must be taught."

"She is wasting away with some inward disease, sir, be assured of that. Though she never complains, she cannot last long, and you see she never sends for a doctor ! it is my firm belief she wants to die !"

"It is the best thing she could do," returned the baronet, who, perhaps, had he drank less brandy, might have been more prudent in his choice of language, and used words to conceal the truth, instead of so shamelessly betraying it.

"Then you do not wish that Miss Carington or Lady Charlotte should persuade her to call in advice?" inquired the abigail submissively.

"I really see no occasion for it," was the reply, "unless you think there is absolute danger ; unless you think, Clayton, it is absolutely necessary ! You women are the best judges in these matters ; and Lady Trenton has been so little in the

habit of following my advice, that I really do not like to give an opinion. In fact, I cannot help thinking you are deceived; and that her ladyship, in spite of her pale cheeks and her rouge, will live longer than either of us."

The waiting-maid shook her head. Hardened as she was, she could not say—"You will soon be at liberty to marry another." But she meant him to understand it. She meant him to understand, that, though fear prevented him actually committing murder, his victim was perishing under the moral tortures, which, with cold-blooded calculation, he inflicted for her destruction. The greatest anxiety of his life was, lest his unfortunate wife should linger so long, that Emily Carrington, in spite of all his intrigues, might become the wife of another, before he was at liberty to claim her. Her flirtation with Marston seemed to realize all his worst fears, and after a brief silence, he burst out into loud exclamations against the artist.

“Confound the fellow,” he said. “I must get him out of the house, before there is any further mischief done! I wish you would tell me how to do that, politely.”

“La! sir,” answered the abigail, who had ten times more ready invention than her master, though he considered himself wise enough to be a representative of the nation, “there is nothing easier in the world. Tell him you want his rooms, for the gentlemen who are coming down about the election; and if he does not understand a hint, say plainly he must pack off. How can you be troubled with painting and daubing, when you have half the country to keep in good humour.”

“You are quite right,” said Sir Charles, “this is exactly what I intended to do. And now this affair is settled, there is a little remembrance for you,” and he threw her a purse containing ten sovereigns. “Silence and discretion; and now go to bed. It is very late, and I must be in

town about the election at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Clayton was profuse in her thanks.

"Oh! that is nothing to what you may expect, on my next wedding day," he said, and laughed a fearful laugh.

"Well, sir, I can only say I hope it may be soon, and to the lady of your choice," answered the waiting-maid; and the death of the inoffensive Lady Trenton, was, at that moment, the object they both most ardently desired.

"Depend upon my silence, and my services, sir, as far as I can go with safety," added Clayton, with a look of most diabolical expression, and she then left the room.

But her business was not yet concluded. She went into the offices, where no one now remained to observe her operations. At least she believed so. She wrapped herself up in a large cloak; she tied on an old bonnet, and lighting a lantern, she went into the pantries, and filled a basket

with cold provisions, and a couple of bottles of spirits, she had secreted behind a tub in the coal cellar. She then left the house, cautiously, by a back door. A large dog kept in the court, adjoining the kitchens, began to bark furiously ; but she called it by its name, threw it a lump of beef, and it was silent again directly, and remained so, till she had passed out, through another door, leading into the park.

The night was very gloomy; yet, fearful of detection, she veiled her light for some time, until she had passed a clump of trees, which completely screened her from the house. She then turned it, so as to shine full and clear on the narrow path in the copse.

She had not proceeded much further, before she heard a low, clear whistle, and she immediately directed her steps in the direction from whence it came. Presently there was a rustling amongst the bushes, and a man's voice inquired—

“ Who went there ? ”

"Is that you, Ned," answered Mrs. Clayton, stopping instantly.

"Yes mother, here I am, tired to death. I began to think I must go back to my barn fasting, you are so late to-night. Have you brought me any cash, mammy?"

"What does a fellow like you want with cash?" answered the abigail.

"Trust me, I know as well what to do with cash, as your fine gentlemen, who are rolling in it," answered the poor outcast of society. "If my father had not behaved to you like a brute, I should have had plenty of cash, should I not, mammy! My poor mammy, she should roll in a coach and four, as she deserves, if I had it to give her."

"Aye, Ned, you are right to love your mother. You have nobody else who cares for you," said the abigail, "and as for the pack of fine folks, I serve them only for what I can get for my own dear boy! I hate them all, Ned; for if they even suspected I ever had a child, I should be

turned out of the house directly, with a ruined character. To starve—aye to starve, or steal, for anything they care, because a fine gentleman once thought me handsome enough to deceive with promises of marriage. They are very virtuous, they are.”

“It is all for virtue they make outcasts of such lads as I am,” said Ned laughing, “and I wonder how much better the half of those who ride in coaches is, than you or I, mother. They please their fancies in their own way, and nobody dares to say they do wrong, because they have loads of cash, and have learnt to be good hypocrites. But if we make the least slip in the world, we are scouted and sent to prison.”

“Money begets vice ; but it covers it too, Ned,” said the woman, “and if I am to keep the gentry’s secrets, they shall pay me handsomely, that I am resolved.”

“There you are right, mammy,” cried the youth, clapping his worthy parent affectionately on the back, “and they have

paid you too pretty well already, and if it is all for me, as you say, just give me ten pounds to-night mammy."

"Ten pounds! is the boy mad?" exclaimed the woman. "You might as well ask me for ten thousand! What could you do with ten pounds."

"I have not had a decent suit of clothes since I came out of prison! and the election is coming on, when I shall want a little loose cash. I must get Sir Charles Trenton hooted and pelted; I owe him a double debt, for a sound whipping, when I was a boy, and for sending me to the treadmill for nothing but carrying a loaf on a pole. Confound these landholders, they'd starve us all, if they could. But we'll let them know, we'll have none of their Corn Laws again. Come, mammy, down with your dust!"

"I have no money, but just a little present the baronet himself gave me, this very night," answered Clayton, who much

as she loved her boy, was very unwilling to part with her money.

“So much the better, if it goes to pay fellows to pelt him; that will be what I call, beating him with his own whip.”

“Keep quiet, Ned, if it be only for the love of me!” returned his mother. “You’ll be getting transported for some of your pranks, and then I shall have nothing to do but hang myself. Don’t get into any more scrapes, there’s a good dear.”

“Then give me ten pounds, mammy dear, and I’ll be as quiet as a lamb,” and he put his arm round the woman’s neck and kissed her, “You’ll never miss it, mammy; you can get more when you want it, for you are not such a clever woman for nothing.”

“Well, if I do give you ten pounds this time, Ned,” said Mrs. Clayton, “I do hope you’ll take care of it. Don’t gamble it away at the Black Bull, as I have heard you are too fond of doing; and let me see you next Sunday, looking respectable, and

going to church. I do want you to make up to one of farmer Smith's daughters; they have five hundred pounds apiece, and who knows, Ned, but I may get you a place in the excise!"

"You want me to be a hypocrite, like the rest of your acquaintance, mother? but that I cannot, d—— me. I have not had schooling enough for that, and it is too late to begin now."

"I could not afford to school you, Ned, when you were little," said the mother, sadly. "I was poor then; but I have learnt how to get money now, and if you would attend to me, you might soon have money enough too."

"We'll talk of that another time, mammy. Give me the ten pounds you promised, and let me be off."

"But you must first promise me, faithfully, to do me a little service," said his worthy parent.

"Speak out—what mischief are you

after now?" was the youth's saucy reply. But Clayton was not offended. Everything he could say, or do, was right in her eyes. This attachment was the only redeeming point in her character.

"You have heard, no doubt," she quietly replied, "that there is a painter called Marston staying at Easton Court. He sets up to be a fine gentleman, but he is no better born than yourself, and I want his true history to be known. The men-servants go to the Black Bull; go there, and tell them, and laugh at Sir Charles Trenton, for bringing a bastard into his house, to sit at his table with Lady Trenton, and Miss Carrington, and the other fine company."

"Marston, did you say?" inquired Ned.

"Yes! that's his mother's name—say that. It will be repeated in the servant's hall, and when the maids get hold of it, the ladies will soon hear it upstairs."

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“And what will be the good of that?” asked the youth.

“I want to get the fellow out of the house,” answered Clayton, “he is no better than a cheat, and he has the impudence to make love to Miss Carrington.”

“I would do the same, if I were in his place,” returned Ned, saucily. “Is he any relation of the curate of Brookdale?”

“Yes! his nephew.”

“And you don’t like him, because he is base born! Well, I don’t quite understand that, mammy, when you have got such a son yourself; but I suppose you’re paid.”

“No matter whether you understand it or not,” answered his mother. “Do as I tell you, and there are ten pounds for you. Remember, I cannot give you another half-penny this year.”

“You are one of the right sort, mammy, that is quite sure,” exclaimed the youth, eagerly grasping the money, with

one hand, whilst passing the other arm round his mother's neck, he gave her a hearty kiss.

She laughed, and called him, her own dear boy; said he must not forget to do as she had told him, and then after kissing him with the warmest affection, she stood watching him, as he walked off with the basket, till he was no longer visible in the rays of her lantern. She then returned home with all speed.

The youth in the meantime pursued his way back to the barn, where he usually slept at his uncle's farm.

“She is a cunning old jade, that mother of mine,” he thought; “but yet I am more than a match for her, after all. I have only to give her a hug, or two, and a few sweet words, and I can get what I want out of her. There is more villany astir than she has told me the half of; but I am not going to say a word against old Mr. Marston's nephew; for the curate is

the only gentleman who ever spoke a good word to me. If his nephew is an unlucky love baby like myself, by Jove ! I have a fellow feeling with him, and I would help him if I could, instead of trying, like a scoundrel, to get him crossed in love. So, mammy, you may help your employers some other way ; for I have sins enough of my own to answer for without being their cat's-paw."

Ned was unusually gay that night, as he returned to his bed in the loft, for more reasons than one. But he rejoiced chiefly, at having obtained the ten pounds, which he wanted for an object in which he took far deeper interest than in Sir Charles Trenton and the approaching election.

Poor Ned, he had been an outcast from his birth. Even his father and mother, sinners as they were in giving him existence, had committed the greater sin of disowning their offspring, in order not to offend society—that great hypocrite—who wears the mask of all virtues.

It was quite natural, therefore, that he hated and scorned all who had neglected him. He was their enemy ; and there are thousands whom neglect has made the enemies of those above them, like him, outcasts of the great social family of proprietors, and despised by those who, whilst they unscrupulously indulge their passions and inclinations, think it necessary to veil their vices from each other, and to attest their virtue, by clamouring against the sins of the poor.

But the poor understand the privileged classes far better than is supposed. They know that, with all their fine clothes and fine manners, and talk of religion, they are sinful human beings like themselves ; and thousands of this class have no more respect for gentry and men in authority, than they have for the parish beadle.

The bonds of old subjection to superiors have been broken asunder by the changes of society. No new bond has been knit between the man of property and the man

of toil ; and the latter no longer content to believe that his share in the bounties of heaven was intended to be reserved for the next world, is ruminating in his turbulent mind on the possibility of his obtaining some portion of them on this side the grave.

Nothing had touched Ned's heart with a feeling of gentleness since he had been released from prison, except poor Kate's commiseration, and poor Kate's sorrow. Her beauty had stirred his passionate nature ; the tenderness of her manner, whenever she addressed him, had moved his heart without wounding his pride ; for her own sorrow was so great, that he, the poor disowned could pity her.

That night, for the first time in his life, Ned felt some consolation for his evil course of life ; for the first time, a longing desire of goodness, worthy to be loved, sprang up in his heart when he thought of Kate's purity.

Love had first taught him to appreciate the beauty and the holiness of virtue. For the first time in his life, he prayed God to direct him to do right, and then hoping to see Kate on the morrow, he fell asleep.

END OF VOL. II.





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